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IN SEARCH OF VOICE: A COLLABORATIVE INVESTIGATION ON LEARNING EXPERIENCES OF THE ONYOTA’A:KA

by

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A thesis submitted in conformity with the requirements for the Degree of Doctor of Education
Graduate Department of Human Development and Applied Psychology
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In Search Of Voice: A Collaborative Investigation On Learning Experiences Of The Onyota’a:ka Degree of Doctor of Education 1997

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ABSTRACT

This study examines the learning experiences of participants from the Onyota’a:ka First Nation community which is located in southwestern Ontario. The theoretical framework for this investigation is Dr. Hunt’s model of Research as Renewal which is based on the inside-out approach to psychology. Therefore reflection of personal learning experience is the basis of this inquiry. Based on personal observations and the interviews of Onyota’a:ka community members there were a number of occurrences where the voice of the people was silenced as a result of their schooling experience. This silencing action was manifested in the suppression of the Onyota’a:ka language; the invalidation of the traditional cultural ways; the transformation of the mind through formal education; negation of traditional education; the undermining of traditional knowledge and values; and the lack of positive identity development.

This study concludes that language and culture are intertwined and are very important to the Onyota’a:ka. It has also been found that a strong Native identity is imperative in order to
sustain a balance between their society and the mainstream society. It is concluded that the Onyota’a:ka need a bilingual/bicultural type of education to make the circle complete.
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Chapter One

Opening Address

It is the tradition of the Iroquois to give thanks whenever we gather or bring our minds together as one. It is through the Thanksgiving Address that our people feel they are making a contribution to the succession of the natural order.

Listen carefully to what, long ago, was given to us. Let's make our minds into one circle. We give thanks for the people, that we still can have peace of mind. We give thanks that our Mother earth as she gives us her living spirit. For the small fruit bearing plants, the strawberry, and other berries that keep their ways. Let us give thanks for the medicines that keep their healing responsibilities, whenever sickness is upon us. Let all of us combine our minds into one.

We give thanks for the sacred tobacco that is used to carry our thoughts and our prayers towards the Creator when it is put in the fire. And for the animals as they carry out their duty and responsibilities. We are especially thankful for the deer that give us nourishment, shelter and clothing. Let it be so in our minds.

Let us give thanks for the trees as they continue to do their duty and carry our their responsibility, especially the large maple tree who supplies us with its sweet juice. Let us give thanks for water in the springs, rivers, and lakes. Let us give thanks for the birds as their songs and beautiful colours bring peace to our minds.

Now we will speak of the things above the earth from here on, of things given for all our benefit. We give thanks for the thunderers that come from the west, bringing fresh new growth to the earth. We give our thanks for the lightning, the great warrior who still follows his original duties. So let it always be in our minds.

We give thanks for our elder brother the sun who brings light and warmth. We give thanks for our grandmother the moon who regulates the waters and determines the coming of children. Let all of us bring our minds into one giving thanks for all the stars as they continue to carry out their responsibilities in the sky, giving us light at night. Let us give thanks for the four beings who protect us and show us the ways that we should walk. Let us give thanks for Handsome Lake, for what he accomplished by bringing to us the ceremonies again. So let it be in our minds.

Now we give thanks to our Creator for everything that has been made. So let it always be in our minds.
Introduction

Little did I realize the difficulty I would encounter in starting my thesis journey. Every time I thought I should start writing, I did not know where to begin. My mind would start wandering to and fro. I would remember a particular incident thinking it was very important, then I would remember another incident and it seemed to be even more important than the last. So on it went . . . remembering, remembering.

It all started when I began the final course of my Doctoral program at The Ontario Institute for Studies in Education (OISE). Until then, I knew that I needed to select a thesis topic but I could not be sure of what I wanted to immerse myself in for the next little while in order to complete the program. The crunch came when Dr. Hunt asked us to write our thesis statement in twenty-five words or less. I felt I was in a river of whirlpools, whirling and twirling, unable to get into the flow of the stream that was moving smoothly and calmly along the river bed. There were so many interesting topics to choose from but, after much consideration, I finally decided that I wanted to study and understand the impact of Euro-Western schooling on the Onyota’a:ka students, and to explore ways that the Onyota’a:ka child could best be served in the formal educational process.

The Onyota’a:ka people are part of the Iroquois Confederacy and now reside in a community located in Southwestern Ontario along the banks of the Thames River in the Township of Delaware, Middlesex County. These people were formerly known as the Oneida of the Thames but reclaimed their traditional name of Onyota’a:ka in January 1992. My interest in this particular community is as
an Onyota’a:ka Band member.

As a First Nations\(^1\) teacher educated in the conventional Euro-western educational system, I wanted to know more about the Native ways of learning and teaching. I felt my experience was only one-sided. I knew what was required pertaining to the Western perspective from whence my training derived, but what about the Aboriginal perspective. Euro-western education has been superimposed on Aboriginal communities for a long time even though there was a traditional way of education within each Aboriginal nation. In the course of my research, I came across a poem entitled EDUCATION. This song of hope was written by Arthur Solomon, an Anishnawbe spiritual teacher. It goes like this:

The traditional way of education
was by example and experience
and by storytelling.

The first principle involved was total respect
and acceptance of the one to be taught.
And that learning was a continuous process
from birth to death.
It was a total continuity without interruption.
Its nature was like a fountain
that gives many colours and flavours of water
and that whoever chose could drink as much or as little
as they wanted to and whenever they wished.
The teaching strictly adhered
to the sacredness of life whether of human
or animals or plants.

But in the course of history there came a disruption.
And then education became "compulsory miseducation"
for another purpose, and the circle of life was broken
and the continuity ended.

It is that continuity which is now taken

\(^1\) Throughout this study, the expression "First Nations" refers to the Indigenous People of North America. "First Nations" will be used interchangeably with "Aboriginal", "Native", and "Indigenous". The term "Indian" is legal terminology used in legislation such as the Indian Act which governs the First Nations People of Canada. The word "Indian" will be used in direct quotes.
up again in the spiritual rebirth of the people.  
(Solomon 1991:79)

The message in this poem written by the Anishnawbe spiritual elder broke the spell of the Euro-western concepts that had led me to believe that the Native ways of learning and teaching were insignificant. His assertion that education became "compulsory miseducation" for the Native people has challenged and empowered me to search for ways that would restore the circle of life and the continuity of learning at the Onyota’a:ka of the Thames Nation. Although the message in this poem has allowed me to relate to the Native concept of the sacredness of life that has sustained my people for thousands of years, it has been a difficult journey to realign my cognitive processes and relate to a bigger picture; one that doesn’t negate the Aboriginal worldview but lifts it to a primary position of inclusion and equality.

In my exuberance to begin a study of the Onyota’a:ka community and their way of learning and teaching I reverted back to my teachings in the Euro-western system. I began by reviewing the learning and teaching styles of Native people in the literature of the "experts", the non-Native writers. I soon realized that this was not what I was looking for as these types of studies have been based on the Western concepts of research and knowledge, therefore giving the researchers’ perspective rather than the participants’.

So while there have been many studies conducted pertaining to the learning styles of the First Nations people of North
America, what I hope to do is give voice to the Onyota’a:ka people of the Thames who have not had much opportunity to speak about education . . . about how they learn, and about how they teach . . .

In the recent past, educators and researchers have begun to realize, and study, the importance of understanding individual differences. This type of research advanced the concept of learning style. In their attempt to understand the enormous range of individual differences between children, these researchers and educators began to look for the essence of individual differences. The research of Berry (1976) has demonstrated that there is a cultural component to learning style differences. Messick (1976, p. 135) found that "ethnic groups, independent of socioeconomic status, display characteristic patterns of abilities that are strikingly different from one another." In Lesser's research the conclusion he drew was "people who share a common cultural background will also share, to a certain extent, common patterns of intellectual abilities, thinking styles and interests" (1976:137).

In a review of research pertaining to learning style and Indian students, More (1987:17) notes that "recent research and teacher data indicate that important differences in Learning Style between Indian students and their non-Indian counterparts are often observed" (More, 1984; Karlebach, 1984; Williams, 1986). Although important differences in learning style between Indian and non-Indian students are observed, More states that "the differences are not consistent enough to suggest a uniquely Indian Learning Style, but they occur enough to warrant careful
attention".

Chrisjohn (1986) a Native psychologist has given a warning pertaining to research on First Nations peoples concerning intelligence testing and all research in general. He states,

The fundamental problem with theory, whether Bannatyne's, Horn's or Jensen's, is that it is external to Indian thought on the problem. Theory of Indian intelligence must eventually be constructed from within Indian ranks, with Indian perspectives and concerns reflected in its development. Otherwise, we continue to run the risk of producing trivial research with post-hoc constructions and recommendations being based on models and concerns insensitive to Indian people. (p.54)

Having been empowered by the words of the Anishnawbe elder and in my search for continuity of learning I was fortunate to be able to study under the tutelage of another elder, an elder from the non-Native society. He too was empowering in his outlook to learning. Hunt (1992:x) states, "I offer seeds for each of you to nurture into your own theory." The seeds he offered were seeds of challenge to begin with "ourselves" when embarking upon any journey of inquiry into human affairs. When we begin with ourselves we are able to renew our own personal energy, release it, and transform it into action (Hunt 1992:2).

With the above note of warning from Chrisjohn (1986) it was with renewed personal energy that I chose to utilize Dr. Hunt's model of "Research as Renewal" as a foundation for my research with the people from the Onyota'a:ka Nation of the Thames.

In examining my quest, to work with the Onyota'a:ka, I decided to use the learning experiences of the people rather than re-examining the traditional Euro-western assumptions underlying learning style. In discussions with some of the Native community members I learned that they as Native people were tired of all
the research that was being done in the domain of learning style that categorized them at the lowest level on the non-Native hierarchical constructs. Upon further reflection, I decided that if this work was going to benefit the Onyota’a:ka, the information would have to come from the experiences they have rather than from the worldview of non-Native people. Couture (1985) describes the common Euro-western worldview of Native people. He says:

It is commonplace that non-Natives are often frustrated by much of [N]ative behavior. This has resulted in frequent and repeated reference to Natives as being uncooperative, stubborn, belligerent, "dumb," impossible, and so on. (p.9)

However, as a psychologist from the Métis community, Couture (1985) reflects a Native worldview as he describes behaviours portrayed by Native people. He says:

What is more useful is to discern subtle behaviors: a self-reliance, easily perceived as stubbornness; an aloofness that is really a reluctance to ask for or receive help other than in an emergency or crisis; a tendency not to interfere, on a basis of live-and-let-live, for to do so is to become discourteous, threatening, or even insulting; confrontation avoidance, which is sometimes interpreted as noncooperation, or immaturity, but which is a tendency to avoid direct disagreement with the individual, agreeing while disagreeing. Again, through all that, one requires a persistent and genuine respect for elders, and a sense of the "people." (p.9)

As I examined my personal experience with the Euro-western school system, I realized that there was something missing in my learning experience but I didn’t know what or how to name it. When my children were coming through the Onyota’a:ka community day school, I seriously thought about putting them into the county school system thinking I would be giving them a better chance at acquiring the education needed to succeed in the Euro-
western society. Little did I realize that I would have been enhancing the assimilation of my own children. Something inside kept me from following through with my plan. I had a sense that the power of the Onyota’a:ka people came from within the community and if I were to remove my children from the Onyota’a:ka community, this meant I was rejecting that power and rejecting my people for whom they are.

In a paper presented to the World Conference on Indigenous Peoples Education, Hughes and More (1993:1) state that "ways of learning" are the mental processes and instructional settings which a student uses while learning. They also tell us that "evidence pointedly states that there has been a failure on the part of most teachers to recognize this need to reinforce with Aboriginal children feelings of pride in their heritage and their cultural identity."

When I graduated from teacher’s college I knew that I didn’t want to go into the Onyota’a:ka school only presenting the Euro-western perspective that I had been trained in. There had to be more to teaching and ways of learning than I had been prepared with. With this reflection in mind I changed my original intention of examining learning style paradigms to investigating the learning experiences of the Onyota’a:ka. By attending to the learning experiences of former Onyota’a:ka students it is the hope that ways to serve the Onyota’a:ka child in the educational process can be illuminated through this study.

This transformation in thought, from learning style to learning experience, was brought about by the experiential underpinnings of Dr. Hunts’s model of Research as Renewal (1992
Research as Renewal is based on an Inside-out approach to psychology. This psychological approach to renewal allows us as researchers to begin with ourselves, to stop and reflect, to connect with our inner experienced knowledge. When we enter into our inner life we connect with what we feel and believe, and this enables us to set an inner base for continuing our life's circle. Beginning with inner feelings and beliefs is a distinct contrast to the Outside-in approach where we rely on other people as outside experts to tell us how to enrich and continue our voyage through life.

Renewal as portrayed by Hunt (1992) is characterized by the New Three R's:

- Reflexive
- Reciprocal
- Responsive

Reflexivity is the first step to renewal. Dr. Hunt's stinger for this first stage is, "if you wish to facilitate renewal in others, you must begin by renewing yourself". When this principle is applied to research as renewal, the researcher becomes the first participant. This enables the researcher to consider and experience his or her methodology directly before using it to observe others. Another renewal factor is sharing or the second R -reciprocality. Reciprocality enables the researcher and participants to join forces as co-investigators in exploring areas of interest. With this kind of sharing there is a flow of energy released that allows intellectual support to one another. The third R, responsiveness reminds us that knowledge is a process; therefore, renewal as responsiveness is ongoing and continuous.
My previous experience with research has been with the Outside-in approach, so this new insight is like a breath of fresh air after a cooling, cleansing, spring shower. It is such a relief to be able to view the researcher and the researched as having equity of expertise instead of the researcher as being the only one to know anything of value. I find the related quality of respect to be of great consequence as this is one of the major principles of the First Nations’ way of life.

To share is another great principle espoused by the First Nations people, so therefore seeing this value put forth as synergy of sharing where the researcher and researched are able to negotiate the intentions of the research by being open with each other is energizing to all participants in the human venture.

In the Native tradition the people are encouraged to advance to their highest potential, so it is reassuring to see that in the Research-as-renewal model, positive emphasis is one of the guiding precepts. It is important to know that a researcher’s optimistic, positive expectations are essential to discovering human potential by "accentuating the positive".

Arthur Solomon, the Anishnawbe spiritual teacher quoted above, states in one of his poems, that 'learning was a continuous process from birth to death. It was a total continuity without interruption. Its nature was like a fountain that gives many colours and flavours of water and that whoever chose could drink as much or as little as they wanted to and whenever they wished'. It is refreshing to see that this First Nation traditional principle of continuity is also included in
the Research-as-renewal paradigm. Research, as a form of renewal, is like the continuous fountain that gives many colours and flavours. Each researcher has the opportunity to draw on experienced knowledge to further the learning process through inquiry. It is this exploration that provides the opportunity for researchers to amplify and extend their experienced knowledge and understanding. The greatest benefit I found in Research-as-renewal was the fact that I was able to manipulate it from a personal point of view without feeling inferior or inadequate in my vision.

The new Three R’s in Research-as-renewal was a way to help me to begin with myself to better understand my implicit theory of learning experiences and to get in touch with the phenomena by reflexivity. Using the Three R’s as my guide I began a venture in human affairs with members of the Onyota’a:ka community.

The nature and purpose of this study was to find the voice of the Onyota’a:ka people pertaining to learning experiences in and out of the educational system through the use of the Research-as-Renewal paradigm. This model emphasizes that as we journey through life we develop inner wisdom from our experience in human affairs. It is this inner wisdom or equity of expertise that this inquiry will try to capture in relation to learning experiences in the Onyota’a:ka community.

It is with great hope that the voice of the various participants is illuminated and can be used to contribute to the improvement of the quality of education for the Onyota’a:ka community. The information needed to complete this study has to come from the Onyota’a:ka people themselves through interviews.
As Hunt (1992) states, "inquiry into human affairs is itself part of human affairs". Therefore the results of inquiry are influenced by the intentions and expectations of both the researcher and the participants as well as by the relationship between them. In order for me to ask the people of Onyota’a:ka to share their learning experience with me, I first had to relate to my school learning experience.

Following the paradigm of Dr. Hunt, the second chapter of this thesis will deal with the learning experiences of the researcher’s journey through the Euro-western educational system beginning at Onyota’a:ka. The third chapter surveys the literature related to the education and experience of First Nations people of Canada. Chapter four examines the educational history of the Onyota’a:ka community. Chapter five reviews the methodology used in the qualitative approach to the research of education in the Onyota’a:ka community. Chapter six gives us a profile of the fourteen participants of this study. The results of the fourteen interviews are given in chapter seven. Chapter eight will address discuss and conclude the results of the interviews.
Chapter Two

Beginning with myself

in relation to personal learning experiences.

As we make our journey through this world, each individual is concerned with his or her own little circle of life. Expanding this circle entails a lot of risk taking on the part of the individual. In my own journey I also found that the most difficult step to take is the first step beyond my circle of comfort.

Early Childhood

I grew up in a very secure and protective environment. That is, my parents were always fairly close by. My mother was a traditional housewife and homemaker. In her early life her mother and father moved from bush to bush cutting trees for a sawmill in the surrounding area. I remember her saying "When I went to school, I walked for miles and miles to get there and I was always changing schools because of the nature of my Dad's work. That is why I could never get my grades. They [my parents] sent my sister to Mount Elgin and they didn’t want to send me, but I wanted to go too." My mother was educated at the Mount Elgin Residential Institute to grade eight.

When she finished grade eight at the Mount Elgin Residential School the staff there wanted her to stay. She was a hard worker and they wanted to take advantage of her skills so they offered to teach her how to play the piano if she would stay at the school for a few more years. She decided that she wanted to keep on going to school. She said she always wanted to be a teacher.

I remember her telling me of the excitement she experienced
getting herself enrolled into the high school located at Melbourne Ontario. She walked two miles everyday from where her father lived to get on a train to go to Melbourne so she could go to high school. She was only able to attend the high school for one year because of her illness with tonsillitis. She said, "After I got through my one year of high school I went to work. I couldn’t get a high paying job because I didn’t have the education so I was just somebody’s maid. I used to think to myself, if I ever got married and had children, I wouldn’t want them to be somebody’s maid. I would rather someone were their maid."

She worked in Detroit as a domestic for ten years before she married. When she married my father, he was the elected chief of the Onyota’a:ka community. At that time he was also operating his father’s farm.

As for my father, he attended Oneida Number Two Onyota’a:ka community school. He did go over to the Mount Elgin Residential School for one year before his father withdrew him from that environment. The children in the residential school only participated in class work for half a day and then worked as farm hands for the other half of the day. My grandfather wanted my father to have an academic education and he felt my father was not getting the proper education at the residential school. My grandfather did try to get his son into a neighbouring school off the reserve but the Euro-western people voted against my father attending the non-Native school. He continued at Oneida Number Two School until he was old enough to quit at age sixteen.

In my childhood my father was away from home at times when
he had to journey to the larger cities in order to find work. His trade was carpentry, and therefore, he worked in such cities as Detroit, Michigan, Buffalo, New York as well as in the vicinity of Niagara Falls, New York. At one point my father wanted to move the family to the State of New York in the Buffalo area, but my mother refused to go because of her own nomadic childhood. She wanted her children to have the opportunity to get an education and she felt the best way for that to happen was to stay in Onyota’a:ka where education was provided. We had our own house so we only had to walk to the end of the driveway and catch a bus to the nearest Federal School\(^2\) which was approximately two miles away.

I grew up on one of the last crop and dairy farms of the Onyota’a:ka Community. This meant we always had enough food on the table, as the men in our extended family tended cows, pigs, chickens, turkeys, etc. for our sustenance. We were also privileged to have fresh milk every morning. The milk we didn’t use was picked up and taken to the nearest milk station for processing. Potatoes, turnips, carrots, squash, cabbage, cucumbers, beans and corn were grown in abundance so that we always had a supply of vegetables throughout the long cold winter months.

We had outdoor vegetable pits where the potatoes and other vegetables were stored. The cucumbers were made into pickles and the cabbage pounded into sauerkraut. As well, my mother canned jars and jars of yellow beans, green beans, tomatoes, and

\(^2\) Federal schools are schools in First Nation communities that are run by the Department of Indian and Northern Affairs.
different kinds of relishes. We were fortunate enough to have apple and pear trees, so we had dessert for all our main meals as these fruits were also canned for consumption during the winter months. At one time, pie was one of our main staples as we had a rhubarb patch, a strawberry patch and as many wild raspberries and blackberries as we could go and gather. These fruits were also preserved and stored for use during the winter time.

I remember one time we went out to pick blackberries. My mother was not one to go out into the woods very often but this time she decided to come with us to pick berries. We were all having a great time until she came across a snake sitting on the branch that she was working on. She let out a blood curdling scream and took off back to the car where she stayed until we finished picking berries. That was the last time she went picking blackberries. If we wanted any we had to go by ourselves.

Those were the days- idyllic days, no worries- for me that is. I remember spending a lot of time outdoors. Both my father and my mother came from large families, so we always had quite a few cousins to hang out with. In the summer we were forever exploring around the old homestead. Since my grandfather had a fair size land holding, we had a large area to investigate. There were streams and ponds with all their interesting inhabitants to examine. There were trees to climb, to make swings in, to hide in, to rest under.

There were millions of things to keep little people busy. During the winter our favourite pastime was skating. In the crisp cold of a sunny afternoon we would glide up and down the
snow and ice hardened stream to the pond in the pasture. Here we would remain, playing and chasing each other on our skates, until we barely had the energy to skate home again. These summer and winter activities remain vividly etched in my memory. In any case, according to my recollection, I thought it was an extremely exciting and adventurous place to have lived.

**Early School Experiences**

I am now going to reflect on my own experience in the school system. I started school when I was six years and one month old. I seem to remember that it was an exciting time: to be able to go to school. I had an older brother who had already started school but I do not remember at any time him reflecting on his school experience in my presence. I attended a one room school house on the Onyota’a:ka Settlement. In this school there were grades one and two. I caught the school bus every morning and rode the bus approximately two miles. My teacher was a non-Native older female who followed the rules of assimilation to the letter. Since I used only the English language when I started school I didn’t experience most of the hardships endured by the other children who had the benefit of retaining their mother tongue.

I don’t seem to remember being shy and reticent as a child, but when I started school I must have learned that behaviour quickly the first year. Thinking back on my experience now, I realize that reading was not one of my strong points. Of course I got through the first year as there was not as much reading as there was in the second year. During the first year I remember struggling through the readers and trying to memorize the names
of Dick, Jane and Sally as well as their pets Spot and Puff. It’s a good thing that all they ever did was come, look, run, jump, and see because if they ever did any more than that I probably would not have remembered it all.

The next year was most difficult and I did not succeed in this grade. When Dick, Jane and Sally got involved with their friends in the neighbourhood, grandparents, little white houses with white picket fences, policemen, postmen, firemen, milkmen, Zeke the handyman, clowns and the circus, it just got to be too overwhelming. It must have been with much determination that I learned enough to pass the second time around. I had to learn the words so when the teacher would make me stand up and read I would not be embarrassed.

I also seem to remember that I had a tough time with my hand printing in those first couple of years. It was terrible trying to control that big, long, fat pencil that we had to use. I remember at home we were allowed to use a nice long slender pencil that seemed to be easier to hold. I remember that I used to chatter on and on and that I was fairly inquisitive as to what was going on around me. It may have been all this talking that got me into trouble at school but I do recall the ruler being brought down on my hands, and pain being inflicted on my body as well as my psyche.

Although I had never been struck before I knew that other students had been strapped for talking, especially for talking in the Onyota’a:ka language. It was probably at this time I realized that if I didn’t want to be hit at every turn I would have to do only what the teacher wanted. I gave up and became a
puppet in order to continue in the educational system. At the end of my second year in grade two I was promoted to grade three, therefore I had to attend the big school next door. This was an exciting time, a new school, a new teacher, a new start.

You see, at Onyota'a:ka, there were four different school areas (see appendix A). As these schools were in existence before the Onyota'a:ka community reclaimed their traditional name these schools were named: Oneida Number One; Oneida Number Two; Oneida Number Three; and Oneida Number Four. Oneida Number One School was located on the west side of the reserve. So the children at this end of the reserve all attended this school. The school I attended was called Oneida Number Two School. At this location there were two school buildings. The smaller, one level school building was used to teach the children in grade one and two.

The other building was much larger because it had a basement as well as an attached teacher apartment. The students in grade three, four, five and six attended school in this building. This school region was at the north-east end of the settlement. Oneida Number Three, one of the oldest school buildings on our settlement, is located in the center of the reserve. Oneida Number Four was the school that housed the children at the south end of the reserve.

Although I was not aware of it, in grade three I continued in the puppet-like state, dancing to the strings being pulled. I came through a school system described here by Matthews (1981) as he reflects on the work of Freire-

The view that knowledge is best acquired by inert
objects is vividly embodied in the person of Mr. Gradgrind, the austere school teacher in Charles Dickens's *Hard Times*. He has his pupils lined up in serial ranks, and stands over them saying that they will have nothing in their heads but facts and that he will root out everything but the facts. To question, or to have an opinion is subversive of the learning process. In Freire's terms this is 'banking education', where pupils are reduced to passive receptacles for teacher transmitted deposits.

Having learned to become a passive receptacle, I learned to regurgitate the facts. I probably started to realize that the only way to succeed was to do everything the way the non-native teacher dictated or fail. Once I was in grade three I buckled down to work; by the time I left that school in grade six I was one of the top graduates.

One thing that I resent about this time period was the fact that I was discouraged from pursuing my creative interest in art. It was during the years between grades three and six that I was informed by my teacher that I would never be an artist. Today I have my Art Specialist Certificate and have displayed my personal art several years in a row at the annual First Nations Art Show. My art work depicting Native spirituality has even been shown on a television program. WHAT MADE ME QUIT?... insecurity, discouragement, lack of self-esteem, low teacher expectations ...

WHAT MADE ME START UP AGAIN? I started to look at the area of art again in order to encourage the young Native students at an open custody facility to pursue their interest and use their talent in the art field. After much study of the Aboriginal people in Canada I knew the importance of encouraging the students to be proud of their culture. I also knew the importance of using areas of interest to motivate them to
complete academic subjects. This insight came because of my own children. My daughters were encouraged to follow their visions in music and art. While I was home with the children I found much joy in using my creative talents to produce Native arts and crafts. My second daughter seemed to have a natural creative visual art talent which was almost stifled in grade seven by her female art teacher. As a mother I had to intervene on her behalf so that she would not end up with the same inferiority complex that was created in me by an insensitive teacher.

I remember when I was in one of the lower grades, the superintendent of Indian education came to the school and asked us what we wanted to do when we grew up. I don’t think he was impressed with my career goal when I told him that I wanted to be a majorette. Now doesn’t that sound like a glamorous job. I thought so at the time, but he hemmed and hawed that I needed to learn more in order to get a real job. I actually got a chance to join a majorette group in my early teens, but I didn’t have the funds to pursue this goal. I am glad to say that my daughters had that opportunity to be in the Onyota’a:ka majorette organization when they chose to do so.

I remember, when I was in grade six, the opportunity to join the Mt. Elgin Indian Day School instrumental music class arose. My teacher must have felt that I would be able to handle the half a day away from school that this program entailed. She stated that if I had any difficulty with school work, my older brother would be able to help me with my studies. Little did she know that we did not communicate to each other about school or any other subject for that matter. Well, anyway I joined the band
and practised day and night on this old beat up cornet I was assigned to play.

My grandfather was the band master for the Onyota’a:ka Brass Band at the time. He played lead trumpet for our Onyota’a:ka community marching band. One day he tried to play the horn I was assigned from the school and needless to say he had difficulty making the horn play because of its beat up condition. He wanted to hear me play, so I played one of the renditions that we had learned in class. He was amazed by the fact that I could even get any notes out of that old horn because it was so full of air leaks.

In grade seven I continued playing in the school band until the non-Native band instructor kicked me out. It was not because I couldn’t play the instrument; it was because I was having fun with the other students and he was being a grouch that day, or so I thought. I figured I didn’t need the hassle of him hollering at me for no good reason. Of course as a youth I didn’t take into consideration any of the situations that may have been bothering him that day. We were still on our lunch break when I and a few others playing tag were on the receiving end of his wrath. The bell to resume classes had not been rung yet and he was telling us that we were in the wrong. Being a strong willed person I got up and left the music class never to return while he taught it.

In later years I returned to playing a musical instrument with the Onyota’a:ka Junior Marching Band. I learned to play a clarinet and an alto saxophone. One day a group of band members (the back bone of the present Onyota’a:ka marching band) were reminiscing about our experiences with that band instructor. We
found out that quite a few of us had been kicked out of the school band for some silly reason or other. With the present Onyota’a:ka Indian Marching and Concert Band we have travelled to many different places to participate in parades. Some of the places we have been to are Toronto, London, Washington D.C., Ottawa, Niagara Falls, Syracuse N.Y., Calgary Alberta, Moose Jaw Saskatchewan, St. Thomas, Ontario, as well as many of the smaller communities throughout Southwestern Ontario.

While I was an instructor with the Native students at an alternative school, my musical background came in handy as this was another avenue to reach the students and motivate them to continue with the mandatory subjects necessary for school credits. The students had a great time learning to play and sing along with the guitar.

Going into grade seven I had a terrible reputation of being smart. By this time I started to enjoy learning for the sake of learning. My greatest joy was working on my math and reading assignments. Instead of going out to take a break at noon and recess I would complete extra work that was assigned by the teachers. My favourite pastime in the evening was doing homework. This was probably because we didn’t have any electricity so we couldn’t listen to the radio or watch television. This homework I insisted on completing was extra assignments that I would ask for because the regular assignments were quickly completed during class time. I think I was able to do this work because I liked my teachers, that is, I liked my math, english and art teachers. Well, come to think of it, history and geography weren’t too bad either. As a matter of
fact, now that I think about it, the home economic class was always a break from the work of just straight facts.

I do recall that I did not get along too well with my second female teacher who taught me in grades three to six and who seemed to enjoy putting me down - that is my impression at that time. I remember one time, when I was busy writing out my good notes in a three ring binder which my mother had bought for me, my teacher came along and started complaining to me about my not putting my note book in the proper place at the end of the day. She threatened to throw my three ring binder into the furnace if I ever left it in the wrong place again. As a matter of fact it was not my binder that was in the wrong place because when she pointed out which binder she was talking about, it turned out that it belonged to another student.

But anyway I returned home and informed my mother of the teacher's plan to burn my books. My mother then suggested that I ask for some school note paper to write my notes on. The next day I returned to school and asked for some of the school supplies to write my notes on. The teacher wanted to know why all of a sudden I needed writing paper. I informed her my mother told me to get school paper as the three ring note book was too expensive to be thrown in the fire. The teacher must have not been used to having parents find out what she said in school because she started sputtering that that wasn't what she said. I just asked for the note books again and started to redo my notebook work.

As for not being an artist, according to my grade three to six female teacher, I was surprised that I won one of the poster
drawing contests that was sponsored by my grade eight art teacher. Although I won, I did not receive the award because he asked me if I would forego the prize, yielding it to another student that had put genuine effort into her picture but lacked the fine motor coordination required to create a #1 painting. It was a delight to witness her pride and joy at receiving the award given for her endeavour although I had to bite my tongue when she would taunt me for having a better picture than I.

Another incident involving art took place when one of the teachers approached me to buy a pastel picture I had completed. I was so embarrassed that she wanted to pay money for my picture. She wanted to send it to her mother and father. Remembering my earlier experience when I was told that I had no talent, I could not believe that she would want my picture. In the end I gave it to her to send to her Mom and Dad.

Secondary School Experiences

Upon my graduation from grade eight I tied for highest standing with one of my male counterparts. This was in 1962, the year, that the Department of Indian Affairs decided to do something new in the school system. Since many of the Native students dropped out of school, in the first year of high school the Department of Indian Affairs school administrators decided they would send some of the grade eight students to summer school so they would be better prepared to attend regular provincial high school in the fall. I was one of the students chosen to go. Even though I was a year older than most students starting grade nine, I was still overwhelmed at the change that one goes through
coming from an all Native system to a non-Native system.

By this time, my shy and subdued behaviour had been reinforced over and over so that I had a difficult time operating in an aggressive and vocal society. I would just watch in awe as non-Native people chattered on incessantly. The more they talked, the more I would retreat into the world of silence. The experience I received that summer is not one of my more pleasant memories. The long tiring bus ride, motion sickness, and the fear of failure made for a miserable summer school experience for me.

At the end of my grade eight school year, I had expressed to the guidance counsellor my desire to attend a certain academic school in London. My brother was in attendance at this school. I was informed that the Department of Indian Affairs would no longer send Native students to that particular school and that all Native students had to attend the new school that was being built specifically to house the students coming from the southwest area of Middlesex county.

In the fall when regular school started, the new school we were to attend in London was not completed, therefore we had to share one of the other high schools in the city. Since our school was designated the afternoon shift, this made for a long day. For the most part I didn’t mind the school subjects I had to take, but I could not concentrate on French. Now that I think about it, I was probably subconsciously rejecting this subject because I was not allowed to learn my own language; and now they were saying I had to take French if I wanted to continue on to higher levels of education. My grade eight guidance counsellor
had encouraged me to pursue the academic stream of education. This quest came to an abrupt halt when I failed my French.

Another incident that did not endear me to this particular school had to do with math, one of the subjects that I had enjoyed most as I came through the elementary system. One day as we were learning a new concept in math, the teacher announced to the class that she would be available at noon or after school to help anyone experiencing difficulty with the new concept. Taking her up on her word, I approached her for an appointment to help me with my math. She promptly informed me that she was too busy and had no time to help me with my work and that if I would only read the text book all the information would be right there. Well, to make a long story short, after many hours of trial and error I figured out how to do my math, but I vowed never to ask a non-Native person to help me again. It has been and still is a difficult struggle, even today, to try and ask anyone for help in my studies due to this negative experience in my early years.

Since I didn’t want to go back to the school where I had failed, I approached the Department of Indian Affairs representatives and they allowed me to go to the school I wanted to go to in the first place. So I entered this school at the general level. This meant my goal to university was blocked because I was no longer in the academic stream. I continued at this school for a year and a half and finally dropped out as I no longer had a goal that I could follow through on. That spring I got married and for the next ten years I was a housewife and mother to my three daughters.
The Vision Continues

One day as I was contemplating existence and the many elements that are involved with day to day living, I looked at my mother’s life. She always said that her desire, as a student coming through the school system, was to be a teacher. Her dream was totally shattered due to an emergency tonsillectomy in her first year of high school. In those days, if you had to have an operation, the Department of Indian Affairs would not sponsor you to go back to school. So, since she could not continue with her education she decided to go to the big city to make her fortune. Armed with the domestic skills obtained during her sojourn through the residential school system, she became a live-in attendant in the suburbs of Detroit for ten years.

Upon her return to Onyota’ka, she married my father and further used her domestic skills, as a housewife. She cooked, she cleaned, she baked, she made our dresses, she ironed, she did anything that needed doing in the house, but she would not go and work in the barns. She also didn’t learn to drive even though there was always a vehicle available to drive; she wouldn’t try. Her life revolved around my father. That was good except in the end when he passed away, she had nothing to live for; and she gave up.

As I pondered the circumstances of her life, I decided I needed to have some kind of a skill. In the event I ever decided to pursue a career after the children grew up and left home, I would be able to do so. After much discussion with my husband I decided to go back to school. Fanshawe College offered an upgrading course in the Chippewa community across the river from
Onyota’a:ka. With much trepidation I approached the instructors of this course and asked how I could attend these classes. They sent me to the Strathroy Unemployment Centre where I had to be interviewed about why I wanted to attend upgrading classes. Getting through this interview was one of the toughest ordeals I ever encountered since I had to speak to the interviewer.

At the Fanshawe Upgrading program, I started in level one the first part of April and finished level four at the end of July. I registered at the University of Western Ontario for September of the same year.

**B.A. University Experiences**

This was pretty scary business. What if I failed? Well, come September I went to pick up my registration form at Western and found out I had to take my form to every instructor whose course I wanted to take and ask him or her to sign the form, admitting me to the class. I didn’t have a clue as to what course I wanted to take. Finally after standing in different lines for hours, someone asked me what it was I eventually wanted to do. So I said I wanted to be a teacher. The next question was. ‘What subject do you want to teach?’ Quickly thinking back to my past school experience I remembered that I enjoyed the sewing classes so I replied I wanted to be a Home Ec. teacher. Well that finally produced some results as this person sent me over to Brescia College where they deal with Home Economics. The person I met there was wonderful. She took the time to explain the necessary prerequisites I needed to get into the Home Economic field. She said I would have to have Math 023 since I
didn't have grade thirteen math. She also said I would need to take English 020, Psychology 020, Biology 020, and Chemistry 020. Well after looking in the calendar to see who taught these courses, I proceeded to each instructor for his or her signature. Although it was time consuming and confusing this procedure went along as smoothly as possible until I got to the Psychology department and found out that all Psychology 020 classes were filled.

I was told that King's College still had openings, so I hopped a bus and proceeded to King's College. I thought it was a bit far but if I had to go there then I would. In the mass confusion and chaos of my first few days at university I became overwhelmed and on my application to the psych class I misspelled the word Psychology by putting 'psychology'. The instructor who signed my sheet growled at me; I had better learn to spell psychology correctly if I expected to take it in his class. The humiliation of it all. I thought to myself, 'No way am I going to take your class'.

So I found a psychology professor on main campus who signed me in to her class. I then had to make a return trip to King's College to get signed back out of their psych department. To this day, many years later, I still have an aversion to King's College even though they are now making a concerted effort to recruit Native students and they are trying to promote more Native studies on their campus.

Several times during this first week of registration at university I was ready to throw my hands up in the air and walk away from the mass confusion I was experiencing. It is a pretty
lonely place when you are wandering around by yourself on these large university campuses. I kept thinking to myself, 'you can't give up now. This is what you have wanted to do since you were in elementary school'. So on I would go.

Besides the encouragement of my husband and eldest daughter there was another woman from my community who started attending the university that same year I did. We both took the same math class so we were able to ride with each other and give each other encouragement when the way got rough.

These classes were a shock to the system. Up to this point math had always been one of my favourite subjects. Simple facts and formulae of algebra were the limit of my math experience. When we started with calculus, with its functions and derivatives, this was a foreign language of arrows, squiggly lines, brackets etc. that I had to become aware of really quickly in order to survive. Biology was not too bad as it was just a matter of learning about the systems connected to the living organisms whether plant or animal.

Psychology was another phenomenon that I was not at all familiar with. The first thing I had to do was find a good dictionary to carry around with me to try and learn the terminology connected to that particular field of human interaction. I found this subject very interesting but very challenging and confusing because of all the different theories and theorists connected to this discipline. My problem was that I was taught to believe that anything written in a book is the way things are and you don't question what is written. And since 020 Psychology is an introductory course to the domain of
psychology there were a number of theories introduced.

My recollection of this was that every time a new theory was introduced I would think, "oh wow this is a good theory," but, I never questioned or tried to find out why I thought it was a good theory. My main objective was to keep theory and theorist together and at least know the principle of the theory in order to bring the information back out on the examination. At the time, in my opinion, this way of learning was not too bad because again it was facts, only the facts that were necessary.

English became an immense challenge at this point. We had to do critical evaluations of the books and stories we read. When you're used to just regurgitating the facts of the story, how do you begin to look at things critically, to make comparisons, to find themes, or to evaluate what makes a book good or not? In the end I just reverted back to my old standby method of learning which author belonged to which story. Actually there was a teaching assistant (TA) that really helped me to know what the instructor wanted in the papers; therefore I was able to look at some of the stories with a much more discerning eye.

Chemistry was another story. I went into formula overload with this subject. Because I was spending much of my time learning the intricacies of math, the terminology of psychology as well as biology, and the necessary elements of story evaluation, my brain would not absorb any more so I dropped the chemistry class. The next spring I signed up for two summer courses.

While I was waiting for my marks in the spring I was on pins
and needles hoping that I did not fail the courses I had taken. Did I ever have a feeling of relief when my marks came in and I found out I had passed the courses and was able to continue on my path to higher education. One day my brother came over to visit so I told him that I received my marks in the mail and that I could continue with the B.A. program. He was also delighted to see that I had succeeded because he had heard a rumour that there was just no way that I was going to pass my courses.

I must admit that it was a lot of work to finish these courses. I remember after the first psych quiz my student number was on the overhead as one of the people to go and see the psych professor. As you recall, I stated I knew I had problems reading when I was in the lower grades. Well I still had problems reading. One of the things the professor suggested was that I get some help from the student services literacy program. She even called and set up an appointment for me to go and see the counsellor.

I kept the appointment and had to go in for a reading test. There were several other students in the reading group. This was one of the worst experiences in my educational process. To begin with I started out with the fear of failure, then I had to talk out loud to these people. There was no privacy. When we got through reading and answering the questions and the counsellor asked for our scores, one of the things she said to me in front of the other students was, "at least you can say you have been to university, you don’t have to say you didn’t make it".

I sat through this humiliating experience never to return to that service again. I didn’t have much confidence in myself;
therefore I didn’t need to be where other people reinforced my low self-esteem. With much self-determination and encouragement from my husband I managed to get through the next two years of reading, writing and sometimes having to speak at seminar presentations. The end result of this laborious process was that I received my Bachelor of Arts degree from the University of Western Ontario.

B. Ed. Experiences

When I first reentered the educational system, my goal was to obtain the requisite for a grade twelve equivalent. As that goal was nearing completion the next step in my journey began to focus and I decided to try and acquire the one year of undergraduate courses necessary to gain entrance to the Indian Teacher Education Program. It was during this first phase in the two year program that my intentions changed.

My goal became a B.A. undergraduate degree. Now with that completed my next aim was to get my teaching credentials, so that meant another year at the teachers college. Since psychology was the major in my undergraduate work, I didn’t have a teaching subject, therefore I ended up taking the Primary, Junior and Intermediate teaching program.

I actually enjoyed my year at teachers college. Up to this point in time I always tended to shy away from anything to do with art because of my early experience in this area. During this year we, as teaching students, had to do an art course to enable us to work more effectively with the young students we would encounter. This is where I realized art could be a
positive experience. We had to do art work so that we would know how students felt when we gave them this kind of activity.

In one particular exercise the instructor had us draw and paint a picture of our favourite pastime or hobby. Well since I did a lot of bead work I did a self portrait of me working on a beading loom. Next thing I knew, my self portrait was hanging on the wall in the hall above the entrance to the classroom area. I enjoyed that year and I certainly learned how to prepare lesson plans. Graduating with a B. Ed was an exciting event in my journey through the educational system.

Special Education Experiences

The year I attended teachers college was the last year they had the Indian Teacher Education Program at the University of Western Ontario. But this year gave me a lot of insight into the field of education. I wanted to be able to work with my own people. How could I do that? Even with two undergraduate degrees under my belt I felt that I was still far from being adequately prepared to even begin to work with my people. I still did not have the self confidence needed to feel competent.

It was during this time of doing undergraduate work that I started to become aware of many different issues and how they related to First Nations people. As I contemplated the knowledge I had received so far in my educational journey, I began to question my own motives for continuing in this Euro-Western style of education. What is it that I wanted to do? It always came back to the idea that I wanted to be able to work with my own people. So with my low self esteem what could I do? It came to
me. If I got "more" education I would be even better equipped to
work with them. So at this point I decided that I needed to
concentrate on Special Education, as it seemed to me that our
Native people were having such great difficulty surviving in the
educational system.

So that summer I enrolled in part one of Special Education.
This was a tremendous learning experience. I didn’t know there
could be so many different things that could cause a child to be
designated a candidate for a Special Ed program. My background
was, you went to school, you behaved yourself, and you did what
the teacher told you. You learned or you failed. It was here
that I learned that individual learning styles are very important
and that in the past, well-intentioned teaching did not always
produce student success.

My studies led me to Harry Chapin’s song "Flowers are Red".
This song represents a vivid picture of what can happen to a
child if the learning style and teaching style are not
compatible. The song is about a little boy who starts school
full of the spirit for learning. But, alas, in his first few
days he learns that he has to submit his spirit to that of the
teacher. As he tries to give visual expression to the many
colours and things around him, this is what happens according to
the song. The teacher said:

"It’s not the time for art young man, and anyway
flowers are green and red. There’s a time for
everything young man. And a way it should be done,
You’ve got to show concern for everyone else, for
you’re not the only one". And she said "Flowers are
red young man, green leaves are green. There’s no need
to see flowers any other way, than the way they always
have been seen".

(Huff, Snider, Stephenson 1986 p.6)
The dissonance and disharmony in this song made me realize that many students in the school system sometimes have difficulty dealing with the teachers.

I liked Special Ed because at least it made the teachers more aware that not all students learn at the same pace, not all students learn the same way and to be different is not to be dumb. With much enthusiasm I completed the requirements for this summer course.

What now? I had my Bachelor of Arts degree, my Bachelor of Education degree as well as Part II Special Education. Did this mean I'd have to go and look for work? As I was pondering this question, I decided that I kind of liked learning new things. So I decided to sneak a peek into the university calendar to see what else was going on. It was at this time I learned that in order to continue into graduate work you had to have at least one year of working experience in the desired field. Well, so much for graduate studies, I didn't even have a job.

But as things turned out, I was able to get a part time position working with a class of grade five and grade six students from September to December, and then in January I applied for another temporary position in the county system as a Native Education Field Worker. This helped me fulfill the criteria necessary to apply for the M. Ed. Program at Althouse College U.W.O. With much determination I went through the necessary interviews to get myself into the M. Ed. guidance counselling program. At the time I felt knowledge of counselling would be beneficial in my future work with Native students. Although there was a lot of work involved, this program was super
as it gave me a better understanding of people in general and myself in particular.

**Master of Education Experiences**

I remember when I first started this program I was still very timid and overwhelmed by the verbosity of the non-Native people. I was more comfortable listening to what was happening rather than giving my opinion and views. It seemed they had such onerous issues to deal with and I was there to learn how to work with people, so my role became one of observer. I watched with deep intensity all that was going on around me. I felt I was the least intrusive of all the students because I didn’t try to take on all the problems they were experiencing. I was observing the way they dealt with their issues of concern.

One day in our group counselling class we were learning about group dynamics. One of the things we did was a group rating chart on our own situation. Well you can imagine my surprise when it came out that I was the most disruptive person in the whole class. I was so embarrassed. I thought that I tried so hard to be cooperative with every one and then to find out that I was the most disruptive. What a blow to the mind. As it turned out, the role of observer that I chose was just too much for some of the other students. They were uncomfortable because they didn’t know what I was thinking.

This same kind of incident arose in another group when one of the other students asked if I was numb. Boy, do some people know how to hurt a person. How insensitive can you get, and she was in the skilled helper program. I guess we should have had an
intercultural counselling group where we would have learned not to be so egocentric in our ways. What I was doing in these sessions was learning vicariously. As time passed these people began to learn that I didn’t need to be garrulous, but when I did make a verbal contribution it was what needed to be said at the time. For the most part my fellow students and colleagues were quite understanding and helpful in my educational journey.

The second year in this program was also quite challenging. This year we had to do our internship placement. The supervisor gave me a chance to choose where I wanted to complete this course requirement. Well it so happened that I knew the Onyota’a:ka guidance counsellor; so I approached her to see if I would be able to do my internship with her. She had a colossal job, having to work with all the primary and junior students at Standing Stone School, all of the intermediate students in three different county schools and all of the secondary students in attendance at various secondary schools in the city of London.

With much negotiating I managed to become a volunteer guidance counsellor. I helped her with the different groups at Standing Stone as well as talking to individual students. We did individual counselling at the county schools and at the secondary schools. In one instance I became a student advocate for one of the secondary students who was at risk. This young boy had just moved back into the community the year before and was experiencing difficulties. He had been physically assaulted by his fellow students on the bus and suffered internal injuries; he was physically not an aggressive student. He was a very timid and shy student.
This was behaviour I could identify with so I began to work with him. I explained to him that I was a student just as he was and that I needed a student participant in my studies to help me with my counselling skills. He agreed to work with me so once a week we would meet to talk about how his school work was going. At first we would meet in the guidance office area. But one day I asked him if he would like to meet for lunch. He agreed but would not meet in the cafeteria. He said there were too many students and he did not like to go there for lunch so we met and went to a nearby restaurant.

Over lunch we talked about his school work. He did tell me he was experiencing difficulty in most of his classes. So like any good counsellor I helped him look at what he was doing and how maybe he could do something different in order to overcome the obstacles. One day I decided to meet with this student so I called his home to let him know that I would be at the guidance office at noon to meet him. As he was in the midst of getting ready to go to school his mother took the message. I got to the guidance area at noon and my student partner was nowhere to be found.

Since I hadn't talked directly to him in the morning I waited for him to arrive. When he did arrive he was acting a little different, kind of jittery. He would only look at me out of the side of his eyes— not directly. I just figured he was going to tell me he was still having difficulty in one of his classes so I didn't say anything except ask him if he wanted to go and have lunch. We proceeded to our usual eating spot and ordered what we wanted for lunch. As we were sitting there
waiting for our lunch he asked me "Who told you?" Now I was curious as to what he was talking about so I asked him, "Who told me what?" He looked at me kind of strange and said "Didn't anybody tell you?" Again I asked, "Didn't anybody tell me what?" After much deliberation he said "Since my mother told me you wanted to see me I thought you knew."

As it turned out he decided on his own to quit his geography class and he hadn't let his parents know so now he was a bit apprehensive as to what I was going to say to him. What could I say, what could I do? This was a big dilemma for me. I'm working with one at risk student and he decided to jump ship. Well what to do? That was the big question. Where were all those counselling skills I was working so hard to learn? They were right there when I needed them. After calmly eating our meal we started talking. As we walked back to the school we discussed the pros and cons of dropping just one course and what it would lead to.

With much verbal interaction and a lot of sweat on his part he decided to get himself back into the geography class. So together we approached the teacher and with his own veracity he got back into the class. We worked on a few other problems like his fear of talking to the secretary and his fear of talking to the appropriate people about his lock and locker, and his fear of talking to the shop teachers about his work. It was a real thrill when I heard this young man went on to complete and graduate from grade twelve and then enter the work force.

Why did I choose to become an observer in my classes? Why did I choose to learn vicariously? I can only surmise that it
began back in my early school experience. When I started school there was another little girl who started the same time as I did. She spoke the Onyota’a:ka language; she was strapped twice the first day of school. Six years old, imagine being strapped for speaking, for opening your mouth. Although I spoke only English when I started school I could see what happened to the other children that were more fortunate than myself to speak their Native tongue.

Even though I spoke English I recall the teacher always saying, "I don't know why all you people talk like you have a hot potato in your mouth. Speak clearly!". This increased my timidity. I refused to speak up in case she decided to holler at me about the hot potato in my mouth. I learned to use a wee tiny little voice so that just the teacher could hear me; I probably thought that if I talked softly and quietly even she couldn't tell if it was a hot potato sound or not. Even though most of us could only speak English there was still something to complain about and that was the way we enunciated our words. If it was not one thing it was another. We were told not to speak our Native language; then if we spoke only English we were told it was not spoken properly.

Transformation

This behaviour of speaking quietly stayed with me through the education system, that is until I was in the Master of Ed. program doing my internship with the Onyota’a:ka school system. Since I was based at the Onyota’a:ka Administration Office and they were paying me for my mileage to the schools, I was part of their staff. When they needed a participant for a Training
Trainers Workshop which was held for three intensive weeks at the Sheraton Brock in Niagara Falls, they sent me.

Although I was at the Masters level of education I was still a very shy and insecure individual. I had learned much in my undergraduate work and I was still trying to develop my self-confidence; therefore I welcomed this learning opportunity. I felt since I was chosen to participate in this workshop that it would be a process of tremendous experiential learning to meet many different First Nations people from Eastern and Central Canada. It turned out to be an exciting and memorable event that allowed me to reflect and sort through much of the information that I had accumulated to date.

In one session the facilitator asked a question pertaining to stress. Since I was doing a teaching assistantship (TA) with one of the instructors who was working with Hans Selye’s writings on stress, I was fairly familiar with all aspects of stress and was therefore able to answer the question. The problem was that I always reverted back into my old learned behaviour of answering in a near whisper. The facilitator was standing almost in front of my desk so I figured he would be able to hear me. What I didn’t realize was that the people at the other end of the class couldn’t hear. I hadn’t made the connection that I was sharing information with the other people in the group, and not just the teacher and that in order for them to receive the sharing, I had to speak up.

All I remember was getting very angry when the facilitator rudely asked me to speak up. Even if he wasn’t rude my self-concept was so low that I felt he was being very mean and nasty
to expect me to answer any louder than I had. He tried to use an example of a fire to get me to speak louder. He said, "What if the building was burning down, what would you say?"

By this time I was down right angry and embarrassed; I wasn’t going to answer the way he wanted me too, no matter what. So I said, "...." in my normal tone of voice. He kept getting angrier at me and finally told the rest of the participants that if anyone had anything to say that is important it should be said loud enough for everybody to hear. By this time I was so angry that I wasn’t about to listen to sensible advice. It just so happened that I had travelled with another participant from Onyota’a:ka so I didn’t have my own car there. If my car had been available I would have packed up and left that meeting immediately. But I didn’t know where the bus station was and I didn’t know where the train station was and it was too far to walk so I had to stay.

The next morning I had a weighty counselling session with myself, whether or not I should go to breakfast and then to class, or whether I should now look for the bus station. Well as I debated the question back and forth, I continued to get dressed. What would I do? Would I put into practice what I had been learning or would I ignore all my teachings and high tail it out of there? By the time I was dressed it was time to go to breakfast and by that time I talked myself into staying and facing the results of my encounter with this particular facilitator.

I accepted the challenge and didn’t run away from the experience although I was totally embarrassed coming into the
room where everybody was watching to see what would happen. I just kept my head up high and went about my business. During the day several of the other participants spoke encouragingly to me about the incident. But you can be sure that I didn’t open my mouth again for the duration of the workshop. So although my feathers were ruffled through this incident, it did give me something to think about, that is, if I have something to say and it is important enough for everyone to hear, I must speak to be heard.

The same week this particular workshop ended I had been invited to speak to an undergraduate class. This arrangement had been made by my supervising professor who was well aware of my quiet behaviour. The next week when I saw my supervisor, he had already spoken to the instructor of the undergraduate class and was really quite shocked at the feedback. His first remark was, "What happened to you? Jim told me you spoke out very clearly and you were very informative in his class." Little did he know that I had to experience a traumatic negative incident in order to move forward in a positive manner.

Armed with the optimistic background of phenomenology and using empathy and unconditional positive regard, I was ready to meet the challenges of my future students. Little did I know just how challenging my work was going to be and how often I would call upon the skills I had acquired in this portion of my educational journey.
Teaching Experiences

At the completion of my Master of Education program I once again wondered what the next step would be. I had accomplished yet another goal by obtaining a Master’s Degree. What did the future hold? How would I use my newly developed skills?

One day in early January 1983, I received a phone call from the N’amerind Friendship Centre located in London, Ontario. The caller informed me that the Director of a Native Group Home in the Halton Region was seeking a teacher of Native origin to teach basic Math and English skills to his residents. The informant left the name and number of the Director in case I wanted to pursue this avenue of employment.

At the time, I was self-employed as a "Creative Circle" needle craft dealer, but as you can well imagine, this was not my life’s ambition although it kept me occupied in my spare time. Having recently received my Master of Education Degree I was in the market for a teaching position.

After a thorough study of the map I found out the job would be about a two hour drive from my home. Did I want a job that badly? My first inclination was to put the telephone number somewhere between the pages of the telephone book and leave it there. But curiosity got the better of me and I ended up talking to the Director and next thing I knew, I had an interview for the following morning to meet the principal. The result of this interview was the beginning of a challenging position with the Halton Board of Education teaching the "hard to serve".

The students I started out with were between the ages of fourteen and seventeen. They told me they were in grades nine or
ten but, according to the assessments I did, they were reading at the grade two, three, or four level and their arithmetic skills were about the same.

This first group of students were very co-operative in the education program that was developed for them. This may have been due to the fact that they were given some choice by the Director whether to have a Native or a non-Native teacher. They chose a Native teacher and so that gave us an understanding that we were going to work together to try and learn skills necessary to succeed in school work. The school work was on an individual basis so, for the most part, the school days were relatively calm.

One day I arrived at the school and to my dismay there was a new student there. He had become a resident because of several attempts to commit suicide. He was a handsome lad but he had a foul mouth. He was convinced that he didn’t have to come to school because he was over sixteen. After a very loud discussion during which he used a number of four letter words for emphasis, he was brought into the classroom by the staff. After a few initial questions concerning grade level, he was given a grade nine math book to work out of. He worked away at this math not complained too vigorously.

When it came time to work on English, I gave him work from the first unit, "Getting to Know You". He started to work on it then, all of a sudden, he crumpled up his paper and threw it on the floor. He said, "You’re not getting anything on me. You don’t have to know this." I was quite surprised by his reaction and asked what the problem was. He said he wouldn’t do that kind
of work. He would not write about himself. Of course being a new teacher I felt that I needed to exert my own authority so we had a bit of a confrontation. We engaged in a power struggle as to whether he would pick up the crumbled paper or not. I turned back to my desk and started writing about what was happening.

Finally, he asked if I was going to give him some work to do. I told him if he wanted to do anything he would have to pick up his paper. He did. Then we had a talk about our expectations. He said he didn’t have to do anything because he would start screaming and the staff would come and get him. I told him to go ahead and scream. He let out a loud yell. I told him if he wanted to impress anyone, he would certainly have to scream louder than that. Every time he screamed, I would say "louder" and hoped that the residence staff would not think I was hurting the student. This went on for a few minutes until he finally started laughing. It was a comical situation but I agreed not ‘to get to know him’ if he would do other kinds of work in English.

A little later this same student, while I was working with another, decided to see how I would react when he came into the room with a short piece of rope around his neck. I don’t know where he got the rope, but he came trotting into the room and headed for one of the water pipes running along the ceiling. The other student and I looked at each other and shrugged our shoulders and continued working. The boy with the rope around his neck looked at us and said, "Oh, sorry. I didn’t know anybody was in here. I’ll go look for another spot". So he proceeded out the door then we heard "ahh ahh ahh". I thought to
myself, "Should I go and see what is happening or not?" I knew he was trying to get a reaction out of me so I remained where I was. Shortly, he peeked around the corner with a big grin on his face.

A few days later he was up to more of his shenanigans. Once again I was engaged in a program with another student when he came charging into the room with an upraised hatchet. I looked at him and very calmly said, "What are you doing?" He stopped, dropped the hatchet to his side and had a sheepish grin on his face. He went back out and the other student and I continued with our project. These incidents, of course, were reported to staff so an eye could be kept on him in case things got serious.

Another time he, along with one other student, were working on an English assignment and we were discussing something about a little old lady. All of a sudden this fellow spoke up and said, "We are street kids and you know what we’d do? We’d take your glasses and your shoes and we’d sell them". I said, "These old shoes. Nobody would buy them and my glasses were made for my vision, therefore they wouldn’t do anybody else any good so your efforts would be wasted." He then said, "Well we could smash them". We talked about what good it would do him. He finally said, "No I won’t take your shoes and glasses". But they couldn’t seem to settle down.

The next thing I knew they got hold of some leather lacing and wanted to tie me up. They said if I let them tie me up they would do their work. I would have no part of their mischief so they tied each other up. When they each had a turn at outsmarting the other with that lacing, they sat back down and
started to concentrate on their English lesson again.

Eventually this young boy, who was always attempting suicide, started to work. He did more than what was required of him. If one of the other students was away, he would come to the classroom to be assigned work in their place. One day, when staff was frantically looking for him, he was found in the classroom calmly working at his school work. According to the Director, this boy's probation officer was so amazed at the change of attitude in the student that he wished he could bottle up whatever it was that I had which was working with the student and sell it. This was only one of the many interesting cases that I had while working in this situation. I had many mixed feelings about teaching in a group home but I certainly drew on the skills I had gained during my educational voyage to this time.

The next teaching position I had also allowed me to use every learning experience I had acquired in my educational journey. It was in a Young Offenders Closed Custody Facility-Treatment Component. My duties consisted of teaching core subjects to youth and adolescent males and females ages ten to seventeen experiencing mental distress. The instructional program consisted of individualized programming according to the differing needs of the students. Core subjects included English, Math, Canadian Geography, Canadian History, and Life Skills. Art and craft projects were an integral part of the program. The computer was used by the students for simulation and problem solving situations as well as for drill and tutoring purposes.
Although I enjoyed the challenge of working with these students, nevertheless it was a very tense situation to be in day after day so I decided to take a break and pursue another goal in my personal educational journey. I applied to the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education for a Doctor of Education program in Adult Education. The program is very popular and was filled very quickly; therefore I was not able to continue in my path to higher learning. The next year I applied to the counselling program. Again my application was turned down due to the many applicants to this program.

This time I felt I had to know how I could continue with my educational journey so I went to see the registrar. After a short discussion she put me in touch with the Chair of Applied Psychology who put me in touch with an instructor who was involved with the Focus on Teaching program that had a multicultural component. After a short meeting the instructor stated that if I wrote an acceptable qualifying research paper I would be accepted into the Focus on Teaching with a Multicultural component program.

What another tense situation to be in. I wrote the qualifying paper and drove through a tornado storm to deliver it by the due date. I was accepted to the program and this began another step in my educational learning experience. The first year of my doctoral program I attended OISE on a part time basis. I still had my full time position teaching the youth in the treatment center and I also had a weekend supply job at the Onyota’a:ka United Church as their lay minister. That same year
I also started to take correspondence courses with the Francis Sandy Native Ministry Training Centre in Paris, Ontario. I was in overload and the work in my first course suffered from lack of time commitment. I had been out of the habit of intense reading and dedicated studying for quite a few years. The consequence was that my early doctoral course work was not satisfactory. The instructor of this first doctoral course suggested I drop his course. He stated that he would help me to get a withdrawal without penalty because this dissatisfactory work was not discovered until after the final withdrawal date. I appreciated his concern to have me drop the course without penalty, but I knew within myself that if I dropped out at that point I would probably never attempt the doctoral program again. I did not drop out, but I did have to scramble. I managed to find out what I had to do to stay in the course. I completed this first course and was able to realign my learning processes to stay on track for the rest of the doctoral program requirements.

It was with this first course at OISE that I started to integrate my own personal experience into the Euro-western theories of childhood development. Before this, it seemed that I was always thinking of ways to make the material relevant but always in an objective way, never bringing my own personal knowledge and experience to the task. I would scour reading material to find things written about Native people that would fit the situation and write about that. I was still under the false assumption that if it is not written down then it is not valid information.

By using my own experience, it became a significant stepping
stone in my continued learning journey. With this new found experience I was able to complete the required course work for the doctoral program and get a couple of articles published in different journals. The thesis process is another requirement of the program which entails a lot of work. I thought that writing another paper would be really quite simple, but when I started the paper it was not quite as simple as I was hoping. This process enabled me to talk to various Native people about their learning experiences and to also do more research about Indigenous people across Canada and the United States as well as other parts of the world.

In this learning journey I also had the opportunity to team teach with one of the professors at OISE. We created the course called "Examining the Teaching-Learning Process From An Aboriginal Perspective." This has been a positive learning experience and has led me to a teaching position at the University of Toronto, teaching the course called "First Nations' Perspective on Canada." This experience in turn has allowed me to also teach a second course at University College called "Politics of Aboriginal Self-Government."

I remember when I graduated with my Bachelor of Education, my mother was very proud of my accomplishments. At a little get together, she talked of how her dream had been to become a teacher. She stated that I had fulfilled her dream of becoming a teacher. She has since passed on from this world, but I wonder what she would say if she were here to hear the students calling out to Professor Antone as I walk along the paths of the campus.
Informal Educational Experience

- Native Spirituality

Although academic education has played an important part of my learning experiences and development, the informal teachings I received from my own people have also influenced my learning experience and way of life.

My Native spiritual revitalization began way back in the early sixties when I was beginning my teenage years. My uncle, who had moved with his parents at a young age to the United States, obtained his Bachelor of Arts at a university in Michigan. During this time he had access to historical and anthropological information pertaining to the Onyota’a:ka people in New York state and Wisconsin. When he moved back to Onyota’a:ka of the Thames, he continued to learn the history of our people, and he eventually took it upon himself to work with the youth in the community to form the Oneida Youth Council. This council consisted of various young people of the Onyota’a:ka community from the different Christian denominations. We met for a common cause and this was to rekindle our Onyota’a:ka identity. We met at the various churches as well as at the Longhouse.

Because my uncle had become aware of the need for a more positive concept of the Onyota’a:ka people, he wanted the youth of the community to learn leadership skills so that we could carry on the more traditional aspects of our Native way. We began by learning the Iroquois social dances of the Longhouse and from there we went on to learn about the Iroquois Creation story. We learned about the Tree of Peace formed from the message of the Peacemaker. We learned of the Great Law. We learned the
teachings of Handsome Lake. We learned about the various ceremonies associated with the Iroquois system. We learned about the clan system. We learned about the teachings of the circle. We learned about the teachings of the wampum.

Once we started learning of the teachings and the dances, he taught us about the Onyota’a:ka traditional clothing once worn by our people. With the help of my mother, who was an extremely good seamstress, he taught us how to make traditional Native outfits using today’s fabric. Once the outfits were constructed, he patiently taught us how to do the decorative beadwork that makes the outfits look elegant and unique to the Native society.

In my journey through life I have tried to instill the pride of our Native heritage in my children. One of the ways I did this was to dress them in leather and beaded dresses when they were very young. Another way was to tell them the stories of the Onyota’a:ka and how they came to be here in this area.

As time passed my children joined the Onyota’a:ka Marching and Concert Band. In this Band we dress in our traditional attire and feel proud of our Native identity as we perform in various parades and concert engagements. This is a far cry from when the Native people of Canada were forbidden to wear their Native attire in public.

In these last few years I have found another outlet to express my Native spirituality. Through the years of hearing the traditional Iroquois Creation story, I have now started to give expression to it through the use of fine art.

The creation story tells of the Sky woman falling to earth and how the animals that lived below in the water joined together
and saved the woman from certain death. It tells how several animals made death defying dives to attempt to get some earth to put on the back of the turtle so it would grow, and then the Sky woman would have a place to land on. It tells how in one final effort the Muskrat made a dive and brought earth back with him in his clenched fist as he floated to the top of the water. It tells how the five swans, which represent each of the original Five Nations of the Iroquois, flew up to the Sky woman and gently carried her back to earth where the turtle was growing. It tells how the woman walked around on the back of the turtle and how it grew to be what is known as Turtle Island or the North American continent.

And from the creation story we go on to the story of the Great Peacemaker and Hiawatha and how they went in among the warring Iroquois people and formed the League of Peace. And the Tree of Peace was planted to commemorate this great event.

These are the kinds of learning stories that form the worldview of the Onyota’a:ka people. These are the stories that are reviving the pride and dignity of the Onyota’a:ka as we struggle to make our voices heard.

- Resistance to my Native Identity

In high school it seemed as if everyone looked at me as an "Indian". From my perspective if they looked at me as an Indian they would see me as a negative person. I now realize there was probably a lot of projection on my part, as my education to this point indicated that 'Indians' were a convergence of everything negative, i.e. drunk, savage, squaw, red skins, lazy, no-good,
stupid, thieves; anything that was negative was used to describe 'Indians'.

How could I identify with these kinds of people? How could I be proud of my 'Indian' heritage? Of course 'some' of these negative qualities were practised by some of my relatives so this reinforced the negative concept to a certain extent. My father was a kind and gentle person but he did have a problem with his consumption of excessive amounts of alcohol. Growing up in an isolated section of the community I thought he was the only one that had this type of problem. This did not help with my identity problem, especially when someone in the community informed me that I was going to grow up to be 'a drunk' just like my Dad. Oh, how words can wound a person!

- The Risky Path to a More Positive Native Identity

After our basic training and instruction in some of the traditional elements of our culture with the Oneida Youth Council, we then started travelling to various places to perform our traditional way of social dancing. One of the first places we went to was the fall banquet of the Indian Defence League of America at Niagara Falls, Ontario. In order to get there we needed to raise some money. So our group decided to raise money by having a concession booth at the Onyota’a:ka fall fair.

By this time our outfits were made, so we wore them to this annual event. It was a proud moment to see all these young Onyota’a:ka Youth Council people scurrying around setting up the requirements to run the booth. We had corn soup, hot dogs, hamburgers, fried bread, pop, coffee and tea. All of the food
and the condiments were supplied by the young people through donations. Although the day progressed in a reasonably good fashion, there were two incidents that come to mind as being negative.

One situation involved a non-Native customer. The youth were doing an excellent job of keeping the customers satisfied. At one point we let the ketchup get very low and this non-Native customer started complaining in a very loud and argumentative voice that we had no business letting the ketchup get so low, that the Department of Indian Affairs pays for every thing we have anyway so why is there not any ketchup available; all he had to do was remind one of the workers. Even though we listened to his harangue, the Department of Indian Affairs didn’t supply or give us any funding for our endeavour.

The second incident, on the same day, involved one of our own Onyota’a:ka residents. As I was walking by this young person, she turned, looked at me, then turned to her friend and said, "Who does she think she is dressed like that? [I was wearing a beaded head band with the Onyota’a:ka design, as well as a fringed and beaded dress, a pair of leggings and a pair of beaded moccasins all of which I had made myself.] Real Indians don’t wear glasses."

Not being a person of confrontation, I allowed the remark to pass but it was small incidents like these that continued to keep me from fully identifying with my Nativeness. I didn’t realize that jealousy plays a major role in negativism. But I am glad to say that I persisted on my path to acquire a more positive self-image. It was a lot of work but in my educational journey I have
learned of the many difficulties and hardships that my people had to survive and I am proud to say that I am an Onyota'a:ka Onkwehonwe (the real people).

- **Onyota’a:ka Language**

  From my earliest memory Onyota’a:ka was not the working language of my family. I don’t particularly remember asking why we didn’t speak the Onyota’a:ka language but I do remember my mother telling us that she didn’t teach it to us so that we wouldn’t get the strap at school for talking in our own language. I do remember being impressed that some of the kids my age were able to talk Onyota’a:ka.

  As I recall, my grandmother who lived right next door to us, could not communicate with us because she only spoke Onyota’a:ka, and we only spoke English. I remember when we would go by her door she would only look at us, as we walked by and we could only look at her because we could not understand each other.

  As I reflect, there must have been a lot of information we could have learned from this precious grandmother if we could have spoken each other’s language. All this happened because of the assimilationist movement of the government with the help of the churches.

  As I have experienced the reflexivity of the first step to Research-as-renewal, I have experienced delightful memories which have brought forth feelings of joy and satisfaction; and I have also experienced memories of anger and sadness at the losses we as a people have experienced at the hands of colonial rule. How do we, as Native people, make the education system a positive
learning experience that will enhance the spirit of teaching and learning our children are encountering in the educational system?
Chapter Three

Literature Review

As I was in the process of searching the literature for information pertaining to learning experiences of Aboriginal people I came across a story entitled "Coyote’s Eyes" (Tafoya 1982:21-22). This fable was used by Terry Tafoya to show how traditional stories are used as teaching and learning tools in the community. Stories are told and each listener finds the meaning for themselves as each story presents something for everyone to learn at every stage of life. It caught my attention and imagination because here was a traditional Native story being used by a Native educator to focus on, and emphasize the importance of being aware of Native cognition style. This inspired me to continue my search for Aboriginal writers concerned with Native education and the teaching and learning process. My imagination was sparked even further when I visited this story again through the writings of another Aboriginal scholar, Jo-ann Archibald. She used this story in reference to the dichotomy between Native traditional orality and western literacy (Archibald 1990).

Although "Coyote’s Eyes" was a traditional oral story, Archibald (1990:66) notes that it has been altered to a literate form, in order to stress important teachings to those unaccustomed to drawing meaning from stories. She states that:

The master storyteller would establish the context for the story by first telling us numerous stories about Coyote, the transformer - animal/human/spirit, sometimes called the 'the trickster of learning', who has much to learn on his worldly journeys. (p 66)

The journey of Coyote will be used in the context of this inquiry
to illustrate the situation that has existed and continues to exist in the education of Aboriginal peoples. Cajete (1994:29) states that one of the foundational characteristics of Indigenous education is that there are deeper levels of meaning to be found in every learning and teaching process. The story of "Coyote’s Eyes" is placed before you in this research project to allow you to experience the traditional learning and teaching process.

COYOTE’S EYES:

Long time ago, when mountains were the size of salmon eggs, Coyote was going along, and saw that Rabbit was doing something. Now, this Rabbit was a Twati, an Indian doctor, and as Coyote watched, Rabbit sang his spirit song, and the Rabbit’s eyes flew out of his head and perched on a tree branch. Rabbit called out, "Whee-num, come here," and his eyes returned to their empty sockets. This greatly impressed Coyote, who immediately begged Rabbit to teach him how to do this. Rabbit said no. Coyote begged. Rabbit said no. "Oh, please," cried Coyote. "No," replied Rabbit. "But it’s such a wonderful trick! Teach me." "No." "But I’ll do exactly as you say!" "I will teach you," said Rabbit, "but you must never do this more than four times in one day, or something terrible will happen to you." And so Rabbit taught Coyote his spirit song, and soon Coyote’s eyes flew up and perched on a tree. "Whee-num! Come here!" called Coyote, and his eyes returned to him.

Now Rabbit left, and Coyote kept practising. He sent his eyes back and forth to the tree four times. Then he thought, "I should show off this new trick to the Human People, instead of just doing it for myself." So Coyote went to the nearest Indian village, and yelled out for all the people to gather around him. With his new audience, Coyote sang the Rabbit’s song, and the crowd was very impressed to see his eyes fly out of his head and perch on the branch of a tree. "Whee-num!" Coyote called out. His eyes just sat on the tree and looked down at him. The Indian people started to laugh. "Come here!" shouted Coyote. His eyes just looked at him.
"Whee-num!" Just then a crow flew by, and spotting the eyes, thought they were berries. The crow swooped down and ate them.

Now Coyote was blind, and staggered out of the village, hoping to find new eyes. He heard the sounds of running water, and felt around, trying to find the stream. Now, around flowing water, one finds bubbles, and Coyote tried to take these bubbles and use them for eyes. But bubbles soon pop, and that's what Coyote discovered.

Next Coyote felt around and discovered huckleberries, so he took those and used them for his eyes. But huckleberries are so dark, everything looked black.

Now Coyote was really feeling sorry for himself. "Eenee snawai, I'm just pitiful," Coyote cried. "Why are you so sad?" asked a small voice, for little mouse had heard him.

"My dear Cousin," said Coyote, "I've lost my eyes... I'm blind, and I don't know what to do."

"Snawai Yunwai," replied Mouse. "You poor thing. I have two eyes, so I will share one with you." Having said this, Mouse removed one of his eyes and handed it to Coyote, Now Coyotes are much larger than mice, and when Coyote dropped Mouse's eye into his socket, it just rolled around in the big empty space. The new eye was so small it only let in a tiny amount of light. It was like looking at the world through a little hole. Coyote walked on, still feeling sorry for himself, just barely able to get around with Mouse's eye. "Eenee snawai, I'm just pitiful," he sobbed.

"Why are you crying, Coyote?" asked Buffalo in his deep voice.

"Oh, Cousin," began Coyote, "all I have to see with is this tiny eye of Mouse. It's so small it only lets in a little bit of light, so I can barely see."

"Snawai Yunwai," replied Buffalo. "You poor thing. I have two eyes, so I will share one with you." Then Buffalo took out one of his eyes and handed it to Coyote. Now Buffaloes are much larger than Coyotes, and when Coyote tried to squeeze Buffalo's eye into his other socket, it hung over into the rest of his face. So large was Buffalo's eye that it let in so much light, Coyote was nearly blinded by the glare...everything looked twice as large as it ordinarily did. And so, Coyote was forced to continue his journey, staggering about with his mismatched eyes. (Tafoya 1982:21-22)

The state of Coyote at the end of the story reflects the situation of First Nations peoples who have experienced the Euro-western educational system. The small eye represents the Native traditional educational system which was undermined and
invalidated by Euro-western historical power. The larger eye represents the dominant Euro-western formal educational system where tools and rules were of another society. Coyote had difficulty finding his way with his mismatched eyes; this is also the journey of Native students who have difficulty identifying fully with either system. The beginning part of the next section will illustrate why the Native people stagger around with mismatched eyes. The latter part will recount ways that Native and non-Native educators are attempting to give Native students a clearer vision of the world.

**Aboriginal-Western Relationship**

Before I began a concerted effort to find out how the Onyota’a:ka child could best be served in the educational process, I didn’t understand anything about the underlying Euro-western principles that Native schools were built upon. I only knew that I was made to feel inferior; and that if I ‘worked’ hard enough that maybe some day I would be just like the white people who were running the schools and every other system I was affiliated with. I didn’t understand that the objective of the school system was to implicitly assimilate the Native people so they would no longer know who they were and that they would take on only the values of the dominant society.

The Euro-western laws that governed the relationship with the Aboriginal people embodied and still embody the arrogant and racist attitudes that were the colonial norm in the early nineteenth century (Richardson 1993:50). The British - U.S. war of 1812-14 was a major turning point for the Aboriginal people of
British North America. Up to this point in history the Euro-western people needed the Native people either in the fur trade or in the wars so they maintained alliances with the Native people.

After 1814 the Native people only stood in the way of Euro-western progress and settlement. Between 1814 and Confederation 1867 there had been many treaties made with the Indigenous people of British North America and at the same time public policy towards the Native people was being established. Richardson (1993:53) writes,

To put it bluntly, the authorities who formulated these policies were contemptuous of aboriginals, and determined that they should not interfere with the process of European settlement.

Nine years after Canada became a nation the British colonial laws of the day were combined to form the 1876 Indian Act.

**Effects of The Indian Act**

This Act relegated the Indigenous people of Canada to the status of minors, and treated them as wards of the state (Richardson 1993:50). After the 1885 Métis rebellion the centralizing tendencies of the federal administration of Indian Affairs increased and continued until 1951. Dickason (1992) states that,

The department assumed more and more control over the lives of Amerindiands, until they did not have a free hand even in such personal matters as writing a will... (p.319).

She says:

As the power of the agents [people employed by the Department of Indian Affairs to make sure the Indian people followed the rule of the government policy in
regards to Indian people in Canada] grew, it became steadily more arbitrary. Their duties accrued until they were expected to direct farming operations; administer relief in times of necessity; inspect schools and health conditions on reserves; ensure that department rules and provisions were complied with; and preside over band council meetings and in effect, direct the political life of the band.

As Dockstator (1993:131) points out, the Indian Act was created first to set aside distinctly Aboriginal powers of self-government from the mainstream of Euro-western society. That is, the separate Aboriginal system could only exist in the form permitted by the Indian Act. The second function of the Indian Act was to support the existence of the separate Aboriginal system until such time as all Aboriginal people were assimilated into the mainstream society.

Smith (1993 p.38) states that Aboriginal people were "guinea pigs in a deliberate experiment in social engineering that went disastrously wrong." He says, "It was a strategy mounted by Church and State to undermine the foundations of the societies that once flourished here. ...a way station on the road to becoming brown-faced white people."

With the creation of the Indian Act, the Euro-western society claimed total control over every aspect of the life of Native people, including education. Social cultural transmission is the way of traditional education for the Native child; the cultural norms, values, traditions and language are passed on to the next generation within family and community interaction. Kirkness (1973:138) describes the social cultural transmission of traditional ways before the invasion and influence of Euro-western society:
Traditional Indian education took a practical form. Children were taught by their parents and grandparents from a very young age. They were taught acceptable social behaviour and the means of survival in an often harsh environment. Girls were taught, among other things, how to prepare and sew garments made of animal hides, how to set up camp, how to prepare food to keep it from spoiling, and how to care for children. Boys were taught to be courageous, skilful hunters. Bravery was admired. Training for boys and girls in preparation for adulthood was very important... Learning, per se, is not a new concept to Indian people.

Every Aboriginal nation inhabiting the various regions of Canada knew what their people needed to know in order to ensure cultural continuity.

In the period of early contact, well before the establishment of the Indian Act the Aboriginal people entered into Treaties with the Euro-western people on a Nation-to-Nation basis. It was during these treaty negotiations that Native people realized that, although they were passing on their own cultural ways, it was also necessary to learn skills that would allow them to coexist with the other society that was occupying the land of Turtle Island.

Dickason (1992:333) says that:

When Amerindians had asked for schools during treaty negotiations, they had envisioned them as a means of preparing their children for the new way of life that lay ahead. They had in mind a partnership with whites as they worked out their own adaptations, and saw educational facilities as a right guaranteed by treaty, by which the government had promised to preserve Indian life, values, and Indian Government authority.

The vision of the Native people to protect their Aboriginal choice was eventually suppressed by the European worldview of power and governing authority (Henderson 1995:250).

Dickason goes on to say that when the federal government realized that education was the most expensive facet of Indian
administration, they decided to turn the education of Native students over to the missionary branches of various churches.

The vehicle used by the churches to carry out the mandate of the government was the residential school. The ideology of residential schooling was segregation until the assimilation process was completed, that is, the education of Indians was to be in separate schools away from the white population and away from their own people. In these church-run residential schools, the children were removed from their families and communities for long periods of time, thereby forcing many of the children to lose the cultural norms, values, traditions and language of their people. At the same time as these residential schools were operating, there were also a number of on-reserve elementary mission day schools in existence. Dickason (1992:334) states:

At first, education was not compulsory; however, agents could and did apply pressure on parents, usually in the form of withholding rations, to persuade them to part with their children.

Although the Indian agents did apply pressure on the parents to send their children to school, school attendance did not become compulsory until 1894. This is when Hayter Reed, an Indian Commissioner 1888-1895, amended the Indian Act to reflect this decision. Later on in 1920, Duncan Campbell Scott, deputy superintendent of the Indian department, again amended the Indian Act to strengthen compulsory school attendance to make sure that all Native children between the ages of seven and fifteen attended school. It was in 1920 that Scott told a House of Commons committee,

I want to get rid of the Indian problem. ...Our objective is to continue until there is not a single
Indian in Canada that has not been absorbed into the body politic, and there is no Indian question. (Smith 1993 p.38)

Smith (1993) states that the official national policy was no more Indians (emphasis mine).

As well as compulsory education, 1920 was also the year of compulsory enfranchisement. This allowed the government to strip legal Indian status from individuals it considered were no longer living in "the Indian way". If you had a good paying job you were forced to enfranchise. These enfranchised people were given the right to vote, join the army, drink in a public place, pay taxes and obtain a university degree; all of these Euro-western rights were barred from status Indians. Although compulsory enfranchisement remained in practice for only two years it was again reinforced in 1933 until 1951, but compulsory education continued to be enforced throughout the years.

Battiste (1992) states that,

when another culture is imposed upon children, when another language is imposed upon them, when the values and cultural mores of a particular group of people are imposed upon another culture, then that is a process of what I call cognitive imperialism and we have been subjected to this cognitive imperialism from the very time formal schooling began among our people. (p.232)

She says that,

imperialism is not just language based. It's just not taking a language and imposing another language on people. It's changing a whole way in which people see things. The language is built around relationships and the relationships of people to each other are more important than anything else. The social relationships are the foundation of the community....when we begin to take that language away from the people we replace it with this other language called English, we tear the people away from the very rudiments of that language in terms of the relationships of people to each other, the relationship to the universe, their relationships to the animals and the plants. We take away their
interconnectedness and we leave them empty, lost and alone. (p.243)

Relationships are the very basis of aboriginal life. The elders tell us that life is like a web; every part of creation is connected to each other. It is the interconnectedness that brings balance. One of the many meanings from "Coyote’s Eyes" that Tafoya (1982) explains is:

Coyote, in his normal state, represents a bit of everything. (p.22)

He goes on to say that although Coyote:

accommodated the elements of Mouse and Buffalo into his strategies, he is not successful because he had not learned balance. (p.24)

In the context of this paper, balance can not be attained by following the ideology of only the dominant society. Archibald (1990) states that in order:

to achieve balance one must learn, understand, and practice Holism...[which] is conceptualized in the form of the mandala. (p.71)

Black Elk, the Holy man of the Oglala Sioux, gave many teachings about the mandala that explains the ideology of balance from a Native perspective. He says:

You have noticed that everything an Indian does is in a circle, and that is because the Power of the World always works in circles, and everything tries to be round. In the old days when we were a strong and happy people, all our power came to us from the sacred hoop of the nation and so long as the hoop was unbroken the people flourished. The flowering tree was the living centre of the hoop, and the circle of the four quarters nourished it. The east gave peace and light, the south gave warmth, the west gave rain, and the north with its cold and mighty wind gave strength and endurance. This knowledge came to us from the outer world with our religion. Everything the Power of the World does is done in a circle. The Sky is round and I have heard that the earth is round like a ball and so are all the stars. The Wind, in its greatest power, whirls. Birds make their nests in circles, for theirs is the same
religion as ours. The sun comes forth and goes down again in a circle. The moon does the same, and both are round.

Even the seasons form a great circle in their changing, and always come back again to where they were. The life of a man is a circle from childhood to childhood and so it is in everything where power moves. Our tipis were round like the nests of birds and these were always set in a circle, the nation’s hoop, a nest of many nests where the Great Spirit meant for us to hatch our children. (McLuhan, 1971:42)

The circle of learning is always continuous moving between the social, natural and spiritual world, and encapsulates the balance that coyote was searching for.

Cajete (1994) states that traditional education was a:

process that unfolded through mutual, reciprocal relationships between one’s social group and the natural world. This relationship involved all dimensions of one’s being, while providing both personal development and technical skills through participation in community life...

This ideal of education directly contrasts with the dominant orientation of American education that continues to emphasize objective content and experience detached from primary sources and community. This conditioning, to exist as a marginal participant and perpetual observer, is a foundational element of the crisis of American education and the alienation of modern man from his own being and the natural world.(p.26)

Western Curriculum Ideology

When I finished the B. Ed. program I could not understand why I was reluctant to take my Euro-western education and pursue my vision of working with my own people. I was caught in a dichotomous situation: wanting to work and help my own people but realizing that the mainstream schooling precepts were not conducive to the success of a lot of the students enrolled in the federal educational system. It has been through my intense
studying of the Aboriginal people in Canada that I have learned that the school systems had been designed to systematically exclude the Aboriginal educational context of First Nations' students. Hampton (1995:37) states:

Western education is hostile in its structure, its curriculum, its context, and its personnel.

Hesch (1995) relates that besides racism there are four underlying ideologies that are representative of this exclusion. The first ideology he talks about is possessive individualism where the students are taught to think only of themselves as individuals, as consumers without any necessary relation to neighbours and extended families.

The second ideology that Hesch (1995) refers to is the Tyler rationale. The fundamental organization and manner of most classrooms are based on this rationale as it is ideal for individual instruction. The desks are placed in straight rows so the only interaction is with the teacher at the front. There is a lot of structure where everything is organized, planned and sequenced. Giroux (1988) explains that the "events in the classroom are governed by a rigid time schedule imposed by a system of bells and reinforced by cues from teachers while the class is in session" (p.37).

The third ideology underlying the Euro-western school system is the canonical curriculum. This philosophy is based on the historical practice by governments to exclude people's lived cultures from the school curricula (Hesch:182). Hesch (1995) explains that the canon refers to those "Great Books" by writers such as Shakespeare, and Chaucer, or it refers to the histories
of the Euro-western wars, kings, and queens, which are considered to be worthwhile and safe curriculum content. This hegemonic curriculum is hierarchically-organized bodies of academic knowledge appropriated for individual competition. This has the effect of marginalizing other kinds of knowledge (Connell et al.1982:120).

Meritocracy, the fourth concept, assures that only the "best and brightest" reap the rewards of schooling. According to Hesch (1995):

The primary requirement for success are individual effort and intelligence. The purpose of schools is to distribute knowledge to those who are able to use it most effectively so that they can contribute to society.

This ideology along with the other three underlying concepts that form the basis of the Euro-western curriculum make learning a difficult process for the Native student. A number of Native students don’t realize that it is racism and the four Eurocentric underlying principles of the curriculum that make them feel inferior in their competence to learn.

The Road to Indian Control

In 1973 a document entitled Indian Control of Indian Education was prepared by the National Indian Brotherhood, a political organization which represented status treaty Indians across Canada. This was a response to the 1969 policy proposal of the federal government which was still committed to the absorption of Aboriginal students into the provincial system and mainstream society. In this document the National Indian Brotherhood contends that Native communities themselves had the
right to administer educational programs for their children. According to this document the purpose of Indian education was to maintain Aboriginal languages, cultures and societies. With the retention of these features it was expected that they would be transmitted to future generations along with their unique understanding of North American ecology and their distinctive world-views. In *Tradition and Education: Towards a Vision of Our Future. A Declaration of First Nations' Jurisdiction over Education* (1988), the Educational Secretariat of the Assembly of First Nations found Native communities had very little authority over education as the federal government had defined Indian control as merely administrative control of programs, not the restructuring of Indian education with a redefinition of the meaning of Native education.

The resulting philosophy of this study is that education must be addressed culturally and holistically. It states that learning must be associated with spiritual, physical, and emotional growth, as well as academic growth. And it further states that it is imperative that First Nations use the strategy of placing education into culture rather than continuing the practice of placing culture into education (p. 3).

**Education into Culture**

In examining the literature pertaining to the experience of the Native people in the educational system I have found that more and more of the Aboriginal people are responding to the strategy of placing education into culture. As Marie Battiste (1995) states:
It was not enough that Aboriginal students should succeed in the school system and receive diplomas or certificates. It was also important that the educational processes of Indian education should strengthen First Nations languages and cultures, build upon the strong foundations of ancestral heritage and culture, and enlist the invaluable advice and assistance of elders. The very tenets of Indian education had to change from accepting acculturation and cognitive assimilation as final ends, to revitalizing and renewing language and cultural identity and dignity. (p.xi)

The literature pertaining to the domain of Native education reminds us that we can’t count on the old models of Euro-western education to strengthen and promote First Nations’ languages and cultures; therefore it is up to the Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal educators to enhance Aboriginal education with new paradigms.

There has been much struggle in shifting from assimilationist education to models of integrating cultural content, concepts, and the skills in provincial curriculum and band-operated schools. The Sto:lo First Nation in British Columbia has recently undergone such a transformation. Jo-ann Archibald (1995: 297) describes a case study of a locally developed Native studies curriculum. She states that in the beginning:

Their main purpose was to document the Halq'emeylem First Nations language, traditions and stories. ... The elders realized that in order for Sto:lo culture to continue, their knowledge had to be recorded. Oral transmission could no longer be relied on to serve this purpose.

As more and more Aboriginal people follow the path of higher education, they are enlightened to the fact that the formal educational system in place for Native people was and is not complete. Aboriginal people were expected to learn only the ways of the dominant society without first knowing who they were or
what their roles were as Indigenous people. However, the National Indian Brotherhood policy paper declares:

Unless a child learns about the forces which shape him: the history of his people, their values and customs, their language, he will never really know himself or his potential as a human being. (NIB, 1972:9)

Hampton (1988), an Aboriginal educator, states that:

for the vast majority of Indian students, far from being an opportunity, education is a critical filter indeed, filtering out hope and self-esteem.

In recent years there are a greater number of Native educators as well as non-Native educators who realize that the formal educational system and the traditional educational process can no longer continue as separate entities with one dominant over the other.

Contemporary Aboriginal educators postulate that education for Native people must begin a new Circle. Cajete (1994) asserts that this new Circle of education will have to be rooted in Tribal education thereby reflecting the needs, values, and socio/political issues Native people perceive (p.27). Hampton (1993) also contends that with the current rapid increase in the number of Native educators, there is new interest in both Aboriginal content and method (p.270). Hampton maintains that Native education must reinforce Aboriginal consciousness of what it means to be the Original people of North America so that they can become empowered and enriched as individuals and as a collective. This statement supports the National Indian Brotherhood policy which claims that:

The Indian child who learns about his heritage will be proud of it. The lessons he learns in school, his whole school experience, should reinforce and contribute to the image he has of himself as an Indian. (NIB, 1972:9)
Cajete (1994:28) says:

It is time for Indian people to define Indian education in their own voices and in their own terms. It is time for Indian people to enable themselves to explore and express the richness of their collective history in education. Education for Indian people has been, and continues to be, a grand story, a search for meaning, an essential for the soul.

Along with the contemporary Aboriginal educators, non-Aboriginal educators are also advancing the value of integrating language and cultural content in the education of Native children. Leavitt (1991) concludes that it is possible to provide culturally appropriate education for Indigenous children within the framework of the European model of schooling. He says (1994:182):

For Aboriginal students to succeed in school - still an essentially alien institution for many of them - their teachers must do more than simply introduce Aboriginal content into the curriculum; they must adopt Aboriginal methods and values so that students may come to know their own identity and potential from within the understanding of their culture (see, for example, Barnhardt, 1990; Clark, DeWolf, & Clark, 1992; Deloria, 1992; Irwin & Reynolds, 1992; Larose, 1991; Leavitt, 1991; Lipka, 1990, 1991; Snively, 1990; Stairs, 1991). Teachers... need to become familiar with the culture of their students (any student) and make learning in the classroom as compatible as possible with the learning that takes place outside it.

There has been considerable change in the development of education for Native students. Stairs (1991) states that Native languages were first taught as cultural inclusion programs, then these programs moved beyond language to include elements of Native cultural content. She affirms that, for the most part, the learning-teaching processes in the education of Native children have been unaffected by the inclusion of Native language and content.
Although there is recognition of cultural differences in what people learn there is also another element that is necessary in the learning process and that is how they learn. In an earlier study completed by Susan Philips in the United States she also found,

surprising little attention has been given to the teaching methods used in teaching ethnic minority children in this country, particularly when the notion of culturally relevant curriculum materials has been around as long as it has. It is as if we have been able to recognize that there are cultural differences in what people learn, but not in how they learn. (Philips 1983:133)

How the Native students learn is becoming a major focus of contemporary educators. Stairs conducted a study:

to show that the linguistic and curricular content of native education can be adequately pursued only when embedded in traditional cultural values concerning ways of using language, of interacting, and of knowing. (Stairs 1991:281)

Her study is based on two models of Inuit teaching in North Baffin Communities. The first model, called Isumaqsayuq, is based on traditional cultural values and content intrinsic to the traditional Inuit socialization method, which tells how children learn and how teachers teach. The second method, called ilisayuq, reflects formal schooling. As she compares these two models of teaching she notes that the role of Native teachers will become one of cultural brokerage to act as a buffer between the Native and Euro-western ways of knowing.

Although the Aboriginal educators realize that in order to have culturally appropriate education it must come from within their cultural circles, the non-Native educators too are finding ways to complement and build on the patterns of interaction at
home and in the community. Leavitt (1994) examined the educational biographies and autobiographies by Maliseet and Micmac university students from Canada and by Bolivian Aymara, Quechua, and Uru women engaged in self-education. He states:

One good source of information about traditional education in Aboriginal communities is the expanding collection of life histories in Aboriginal voices, which gives rich new insight into the learning of individual men and women and the learning that takes place within their communities...(p.183)

These collections of life histories have allowed the Aboriginal people to view the education they received outside of the classroom setting from another perspective. This contemporary situation enabled them to realize and understand the value of the teaching they received from the elders in their communities.

The Bolivian women discovered that both school learning and the home learning are essential in bringing together the two cultures in which they live. Leavitt's (1994) findings also state that the Maliseet and Micmac realized that understanding the traditional knowledge and values of their elders, and how these were learned, can help them to teach others with deeper understanding in both informal and formal situations. He reiterates that:

Respecting children's ways of learning means looking at the strengths of both cultures in which they live and knowing something of how their communities have met the challenge of getting an education.(p.191)

In meeting the challenge of educating the Aboriginal students Miriam-Rose states:

we must always remember that culture is something that does not stop still; it develops through challenges and interaction of people and events or it becomes distorted and dies. For the educator, the important thing is that education should be authentic. (Quoted in
Stairs 1994:63)

In Stairs (1994:73) we find that Aboriginal programme developments began with the 'what' of schooling. This is when the Native people began to have a choice of language of instruction, content, and materials used. Over the past decade she contends that we have moved to the 'how' of learning and teaching, a process where educators attend to cultural models of interaction with the human and non-human world. According to Stairs (1994:73) there is now movement to the 'why' of education where cultural values and goals, future pictures, evolving identities and meaning are taken into consideration in the authenticity of indigenous educational development which rests on visions of conscious and deep cultural negotiation.

In conclusion, the literature review reflects the teachings of Coyote's Eyes and how the education of Native people became so distorted. It demonstrates that it is imperative that Native children be educated in a manner that empowers them to value and respect their Native traditional ways. The literature reviewed reinforces the need for a strong positive Native identity which will enhance the participation of Aboriginal people in today's bicultural environments.
Chapter Four

Community Profile

The Onyota’a:ka (People of the Standing Stone) community is situated in Delaware Township, County of Middlesex, approximately twenty miles southwest of London, Ontario (Appendix B). The total population is 4,105. The on-reserve population is 1,750.

There are twenty one community services available to these people and twenty nine facilities located in the settlement (Appendix C). The Onyota’a:ka community is governed by an elected council of one chief and twelve councillors, who serve a two year term.

Educational History of the Onyota’a:ka

This chapter will be presented from the perspective of a First Nation writer pertaining to the educational history of the Onyota’a:ka Nation of the Thames.

The process will start by first defining education according to a traditional elder’s teaching, and then from the traditional Euro-western dictionary.

Education:

I. Arthur Solomon, a Nishnawbe elder’s definition: The traditional way of education was by example and experience and by storytelling (Arthur Solomon, 1990, p. 6).

II. Webster’s dictionary definition:

Systematic instruction, course of this; development of character or mental powers.

Even though each of these definitions explains how people
gain knowledge and acquire skills, they both have different philosophies behind them. Throughout history, the Onyota’a:ka (People of the Standing Stone) have had the opportunity to experience both methods of education.

In January 1992 the Onyota’a:ka of the Thames reclaimed their traditional name. Before this declaration they were known as the Oneida of the Thames. Originally the Onyota’a:ka of the Thames Nation, part of the Iroquois Confederacy, was situated in what is today known as New York State. Due to greedy Euro-western land speculators the Onyota’a:ka were thrust off their fertile homelands and forced to relocate.

The original Onyota’a:ka Nation was eventually divided into three main communities. The first division in 1822 resulted in the formation of the Onyota’a:ka community in the State of Wisconsin. In the fall of 1840 the second group of Onyota’a:ka migrated to Upper Canada where they had purchased approximately five thousand acres of land along the banks of the Thames River in Delaware Township, London District, Upper Canada, while the third group remained in the homelands of New York State (Antone, 1990).

Before European contact, the Onyota’a:ka Nation had an educational process in place which allowed them to be a functioning society. It adhered to the definition of the Nishnawbe elder, as stated above, and was a life long learning and growing experience. This type of educational experience enabled the individual to be part of a society that promoted harmony with nature. In this traditional education, growing children were given opportunities to gain abilities, skills, and
knowledge directly connected to the economic, social, and cultural aspects of their way of life. The traditional setting enabled the children to learn through observation and participation in the ongoing life of the community. The method of teaching by the elders was unstructured and non-coercive guidance (A.W. Abate, 1984, p. 8).

The Nations of the Iroquois Confederacy were basically egalitarian societies with the clans and extended family as the foundation of social organization. Within each of the clans and extended families, individuals supported one another depending on the situation involved. The traditional First Nations educational activities were elaborately woven into the everyday economic, political, cultural, and social patterns. Education was not structurally differentiated from the ongoing cultural life. Even though this method of education did not train individuals for particular economic roles, it did involve training for certain specialized roles and professions pertaining to religion, health, security and dwelling construction.

As in the other Iroquois nations, leadership among the Onyota’a:ka was important. This leadership was grounded in the traditional hotala (clan) system. The word hotala means "your presence on earth carries responsibility." Hotala has deep spiritual meaning to the Onyota’a:ka people and it ties their identity to all activities on the earth (Onyota’a:ka Local Control Committee 1993). The Iroquois people are a matrilineal society therefore the hotala and nation membership stem from the mother.

The Onyota’a:ka had nine chiefs to represent the three clans
and nine matrilineages. In the Onyota’a:ka Nation the three clans were otha’yu:ni (the Wolf), ano:wal (Turtle), and ohkwa:li (Bear). Each hotala had specific roles and responsibilities. According to the people in the Onyot'a:ka community the ohkwa:li hotala had great concern with what enters the body. These people had a large capacity of learning medicine\healing. The wolf hotala made a path. They are concerned with how to make unity in the path. The turtle hotala are involved with life giving forces such as, earth and water, the future, their children and the environment (Onyot'a:Ka Local Control Committee 1993).

In the governing aspect of the community the Wolf clan was in charge of the meetings. When it came time to vote on an issue the Wolf and Turtle clan voted together, separately from the Bear clan, but agreement between the three clans was necessary for the Onyota’a:ka Nation’s approval on any matter (E.M. Antone, 1990, p. 6). Along with the nine chiefs appointed by clan mothers there were also Pine Tree Chiefs (William N. Fenton, 1978, pp. 296-321; Elizabeth Tooker, 1978, pp. 418-41). These chiefs were appointed during specific times for certain tasks such as hunting, and war expeditions. These appointments were made because of demonstrated competence, ability and achievement (A.W. Abate, 1984, p. 9).

The traditional Onyota’a:ka education, as in the other Iroquois Nations, was not institutionalized; therefore the issue of who was in control was not a concern for the Onyota’a:ka. Everyone did what they had to do.

But woe unto the Onyota’a:ka as well as other First Nations people when the Europeans began to arrive. The missionaries in
their zeal to help the 'poor uncivilized savages' introduced education as defined by Webster's dictionary above. Education became an achievement to be acquired in a formal institution of instruction. As A.W. Abate states "education came to be treated as a way of transmitting facts, skills, and knowledge through classroom instruction in schools". He also states that "the Iroquois child was turned into a submissive or passive recipient of imparted facts, skills and knowledge, based at the onset on [Euro-western] economic, political, social and religious expectations" (A.W. Abate, 1984, p. 9).

Shortly after 1784 Reverend Samuel Kirkland, a missionary of the Society of Scotland for Propagating the Gospel, established three small schools in the original homeland of the Onyota’a:ka villages in what is now New York State where the children were taught arithmetic, reading and writing, both in their own language and in English (Layman, 1942, p. 170). As well as these smaller schools, Kirkland's plans included the establishment of an academy in the vicinity of Onyota’a:ka. Since there was an English settlement in this area, the school would be open to both Native and non-Native students. According to Layman (1942), the students were to be instructed in "the principles of human nature, and the history of civil society, so as to be able to discern the difference between a state of nature and a state of civilization and know what it is that makes one nation differ from another in wealth, power, and happiness and in the principles of natural religion, the moral precepts, and the more plain express doctrines of Christianity". As Solomon (1990) states, this kind of establishment was the beginning of 'mis-
education' for the First Nations People of the Americas.

Although the Hamilton-Oneida Academy was established in 1794, it suffered from a lack of financial support. In 1799 it reopened with fifty students and only one was an Indian (Layman, 1942, p. 172). Kirkland reported that many Indians had applied for admission, but that provision for their support, on which he had relied, had not been made.

A. W. Abate (1984) states that, with the introduction of the European style of formal education, the issue of who should control what aspects of it, how, and why, became relevant. This issue of control is shown when Layman (1942) states that "there was considerable opposition to Kirkland’s plan by certain persons in New York who were also interested in Indian education".

'Indian education' became a political issue among non-Native people for control of funding (Layman, 1942, p. 172). In 1812 the academy was granted a new charter as Hamilton College by New York State.

As we can see, even though the traditional way of perpetuating the Onyota’a:ka First Nation society through example, experience and story telling was effective, the Onyota’a:ka did not escape the systematic instruction of the European ways.

When part of the Onyota’a:ka Nation moved to the banks of the Thames in Delaware Township, London District, Upper Canada in 1840 they were no strangers to formal education as imparted by Europeans. By 1843 a formal educational setting had been established for the children of Onyota’a:ka. This was under the direction of the Wesleyan Missionary Society, and became known as
Oneida No. 1 school. It was located across the road from the River Road Methodist Church which was situated on the site of the present day United Church cemetery (M. Smith, personal communication, May 8, 1993). In the early years, the people of this new community along the Thames recognized the necessity of their children learning to read and write and to do arithmetic. The first teacher they had was an Onyota’a:ka from their own community. He taught all the subjects using the Onyota’a:ka language, which enabled the children to learn quickly. However, it was reported that because the teacher was so proficient in his own language, the children made slow progress in English.

It was during the mid 1840s that Rev. Peter Jones, an Ojibwa Methodist minister, moved to the Muncey and Chippewa community across the river from the Onyota’a:ka of the Thames settlement. Although Rev. Jones arrived at Munceytown as a Methodist minister he had another vision for the First Nations people. Jones envisioned an educational system that would teach the First Nations children to survive as First Nations people. Because he had witnessed many events where the Native people lost their land, he wanted the children of all First Nations communities to develop skills in order to deal with the European nations so that they could protect what little bit of land they had left (Smith, 1987, p. 193). He felt that if there was a formal institute run by the First Nations, Native children would have a fair chance of survival.

It was to this end that a considerable amount of his work at Munceytown was dedicated. Reverend Peter Jones began the long arduous task of obtaining funds to begin the Mt. Elgin Indian
Residential School. With much exhausting travel through Upper Canada and England he managed to collect enough funds to have a manual labour school open in December 1849 on the Chippewa of the Thames Reserve.

Due to his failing health, Reverend Peter Jones was unable to continue with the work he started. The school was taken over by a non-Native minister named Reverend Samuel Rose who had problems as an administrator because of his "ignorance of Indians" (Smith, 1987, p. 214). Peter Jones' vision of Mt. Elgin eventually coming under the Christian Indians' control never materialized. Instead, "White people fed, clothed, trained, and preached to the students in English"(Smith, 1987, p. 214). Without apology Principal Rose stated "they are never left alone, but are constantly under the eye of some of those engaged in this arduous work"(Smith, 1987, p. 214). Within these kinds of conditions the First Nations students were unable to identify with the school. Therefore the masses of Indian missionaries, teachers, and interpreters that Peter Jones had prayed for did not come forward. This school was reported to be a failure in 1858 and was closed down for three years in the mid 1860s and reopened in 1867, but never fulfilled the vision of Peter Jones.

Even though Mt. Elgin Residential School continued to exist under the direction of non-Native people, and Onyota'a:ka students attended this facility, the Onyota'a:ka people continued to have their own one room school with Methodist Mission support. The school employed both Native and non-Native teachers.

While Rev. Peter Jones was working to establish the Mt. Elgin labour school, Rev. Richard Flood of the Church of England
established an Anglican Mission at Onyota’a:ka in 1847 (C.F. Pascoe et al. 1901, p. 172). It was not until about 1878 that a Church of England school was started. This school would become known as Oneida No. 2 (Indian Affairs, RG 10 Files, Public Archives Canada). On January 27, 1882 a third school was opened. This school was built for and by the people to educate the children of this community who were not within walking distance to the two other schoolhouses in this settlement. This third school became known as Oneida No. 3. Its first school teacher was an Onyota’a:ka community member who was able to relate to the children in the Native way. His name was Elijah Sickles. The number of students on the first roll of the new school was forty-eight, with the average daily attendance of thirty-five. In the beginning, the parents paid the salary of their teacher, but they found this to be too great a burden and requested the superintendent general of Indian Affairs to make remuneration to the teacher from the Indian School Fund. The Methodist Mission was also approached for assistance in paying the teacher’s salary. All those schools eventually ended up in the control of the Department of Indian Affairs, but it is interesting to observe the growth and development of the educational system at Onyota’a:ka.

According to Department of Indian Affairs documents, starting in 1880 Oneida No. 1 school had only non-Native teachers working there until it closed in 1899. This closure was due to the declining number of students in that area. Oneida No. 2 school retained Native teachers for a long period of time. The last Native teacher at this school was Mr. Levi T. Doxtator who
resigned in 1927. It was also at this time that a new school building was erected, to replace the building that was moved over to the fair grounds. A second school structure was built at Oneida No. 2 in 1948.

There was an Onyota’a:ka teacher at Oneida No. 3 school until 1888, when the Department of Indian Affairs deemed it necessary to install non-Native teachers to instill the way of so-called "civilization". The original school building was also used as a community Orange Hall, and was in existence until 1910 when a new brick school house was built.

In 1944 Oneida No. 1 school was reopened with a brand new building in a location about one-quarter mile south of the old school house. Although there were many non-Native teachers who interacted with the students in this school, the Onyota’a:ka people are most proud of Virginia Summers, a band member who taught the students of this school in the late 1940s and early 1950s. This was the beginning of much change in the Onyota’a:ka. Virginia Summers went on to become the first female elected chief in the mid 1960s.

The last one room school house built at Onyota’a:ka was Oneida No. 4. This school was officially opened in the fall of 1953. When it opened it housed students from grade one to grade five. Later, during a period of population growth in the community, it became the home of only grade two students. In the early 1970s Oneida No. 1 School was shut down due to extensive damaged caused by a fire in the building. So in the resulting reorganization of this catastrophe all the grade one students in the community attended the older of the two existing No. 2
schools and all the grade three students attended class at the newer building located there. Since a kindergarten class was started in earlier years, it was during this time that all the pre-kindergarten and kindergarten children were housed at Oneida No. 3 school. The grade four, five and six students were bused across the river to the Chippewas day school called Mt. Elgin while the grade seven and eight students attended classes in the Middlesex County Schools. The secondary students attended several different high schools in the city of London. Although Onyota’a:ka experienced many programme changes, this particular system stayed in existence until the opening of the new central school, Onyota’a:ka Standing Stone. Standing Stone School opened in the fall of 1976 and all the Onyota’a:ka students from Junior Kindergarten to grade six came together in the one bright modern school facility. Ten years later, an alternative educational facility was established. The traditional Hotinushoni (People of the longhouse) of the community decided after much contemplation and discussion that in order to preserve the Onyota’a:ka language and culture, an arrangement needed to be made where the cultural values and beliefs would be the focus to the learning objectives. So in 1986, after considerable cooperation and hard work a new log building called TSI NI YU KWA LI HO:TÂ was constructed for Onyota’a:ka students who wish to learn the Native way.

As we can see, the Onyota’a:ka have come through many philosophies of education. The first was the traditional life long learning process of Native ways interwoven throughout all facets of the community. Then came the institutionalized process of European ways with the insistence of well meaning non-Native
teachers to "civilize" Native students in their English schooling systems. Documents such as missionary records and Department of Indian Affairs reports by Indian agents did not stress exactly what was taught. The form filled out by the Indian Agent or teacher would only note which students were in what reader or the "established formal educational requirements" used by non-Natives. The school teachers accounts of class instruction are not available but some oral tradition from elders at Onyota'a:ka give indication of educational instruction and content from the students' side if it. When the elders are asked what they did in school they always make reference to spelling, primer reading books, and arithmetic. Onyota'a:ka students who went to residential schools were taught survival skills according to missionary and Indian agent strategies for assimilation. The girls were instructed in cooking, sewing, cleaning, mending, and quilting, all domestic oriented skills. The boys were taught manual training skills such as carpentry, live stock care and farming skills. In the beginning the Native people saw the manual labour schools as a place where their children would learn the skills of the whiteman necessary to secure the success of the new path which combined hunting and fishing with agriculture (Castellano & Milloy, 1984, p. 10).

In the beginning the Onyota'a:ka would have used the traditional way of education by example, experience and story telling but this changed in the early years of contact between the First Nations people and the European people. According to E. E. M. Joblin (1947):

Some of the newcomers were content to leave the Indian
to enjoy his 'misery' so long as he brought in the desired furs to trade, there were others who felt an obligation to share with the Indians the material and spiritual benefits of western civilization. In keeping with this point of view of that period of western expansion, this implied that native customs, beliefs and thought forms must be replaced by those of the white man. With the highest of motives and great devotion, even to martyrdom, the task of teaching the natives was begun. (Joblin, 1948, p. 20)

Then along came Rev. Peter Jones who believed that only by learning the white people's ways well, so well that they could acquire financial independence, could the Indian survive (Smith, 1987, p. 214).

This was at complete variance to the missionary and government policy of assimilation as stated in the United Church of Canada's "Report of Commission to Indian Education" 1935.

The ultimate aim may be stated as Christian citizenship - an ideal that looks forward to the abolition of the reserves, with their restrictions, and the mingling of our Indian people in fullness of personality and privilege among other Canadian citizens. We are of the opinion that even now this stage has been reached by some and that the experiment being conducted of permitting Indians to give up the reserve and become full citizens should be carefully studied, and that the church and the government should get together on a survey of the possibility of a process of gradual enfranchisement. We feel that this ideal must be kept in mind when it comes to the determination of the curriculum of residential schools. Our estimate is that at the present time possibly five per cent of the pupils in our schools can be trained and educated that they will leave the school and integrate themselves in the common life of the Canadian people, but that the great majority of those now in residence must return to the reserve and live under the regulations, as well as share in the benefits and protective influences which the reserve system throws around them. The larger part of the problem which we are studying lies in aiding that ninety-five per cent to become healthful, capable, cultured Christian people - preparatory to a wider mingling and co-operation in the full status of citizenship which will be reached by many of their children. We cannot escape the conclusion that no programme of either the government or the church, looking towards the development of the Canadian Indian,
can be successful which does not provide an adequate and substantial economic foundation for Indian life (United Church of Canada, "Report of Commission on Indian Education," 1935, p. 135).

The Onyota’a:ka people have survived as a nation, despite all these different philosophies, and are now in the process of developing once again an educational system they can identify with. Over the past twenty years the Onyota’a:ka people have made much progress getting in touch with their traditional heritage. According to the personal experience of one of the residents of this community, pride and ownership of the traditional culture gets stronger with each spiral of the educational circle. This may be a result of the adoption of the Statement of the Indian Philosophy of Education, produced by the National Indian Brotherhood in 1972. In this statement it says "let Indian people control Indian education" (National Indian Brotherhood, 1972, p. 28). It is also heartening to know that the United Church of Canada in 1986 acknowledged the disastrous consequence of their well meaning efforts to replace the First Nations customs, beliefs and thought-forms with those of the whiteman. They did not apologize for bringing the Gospel of Jesus Christ to the Native people but for the way they brought it.

Onyota’a:ka Education Authority

In 1991 it was mandated by the Department of Indian Affairs that it would no longer be responsible for the education of the Onyota’a:ka community. The Onyota’a:ka were informed that if they did not come up with an educational plan, the education of
their students would be turned over to the London Board of Education or one of the other reserves whose education system was already in operation. With this in mind the Onyota’a:ka have worked diligently in 1992-93 to develop the Onyota’a:ka Education Authority Model (see Appendix D). This model is based on the traditional clan system of the Onyota’a:ka Nation and its goal is to ensure that the culture lives on. Therefore it will be utilized as a management system which has withstood the test of time for the Onyota’a:ka.

The guiding force of the Onyota’a:ka Education Authority is the Onyota’a:ka Philosophy of Education:

As one of the First Nations placed on this earth by our Creator, we the Onyota’a:ka people have been granted the right and the responsibility to live in harmony with the land and with one another. Part of that responsibility includes the education of our children.

The Onyota’a:ka Nation maintains that all of the child - physical, mental, social, emotional and spiritual - must be considered in the educational process. This holistic approach must be a reflection of the values, beliefs, language and culture of the Onyota’a:ka Nation. Learning will be enhanced through active participation in the classroom and through community involvement in the education process.

Education is regarded as a life-long process that begins in the cradle and continues through to adulthood. It is the process whereby our unique identity as a nation is transmitted from one generation to the next. It is, in fact, the key to our survival.

We therefore maintain that the Onyota’a:ka Nation has an inherent duty to educate our children and that we will have responsibility over the curriculum and the language that is taught (Onyota’a:ka Education Authority Model, 1993).

Although the long-standing Onyota’a:ka Euro-western federal system of education is in the beginning process of changing to a strategy more consistent with the philosophy of First Nations people, there has been a contingent of this community that has
taken it upon themselves to begin a new program of education that upholds the language, cultural values, and heritage significant to the continuation of the uniqueness of the Onyota’a:ka people of the Thames.

The Native Way

In 1985, the traditional people of the Longhouse began long and serious discussions pertaining to the rapid loss of the Onyota’a:ka language and traditional cultural ways. It was felt by these people that even though Standing Stone School had an excellent language program, it was unable to support the extensive use of the language needed in all subject areas to help the students once again become proficient in their use of the Onyota’a:ka language. So in 1986 another system of education began. The people organized themselves according to the traditional clan structure and set about developing a learning place where, according to the elder, "we could teach the children our ways".

Much work had to be done to enable this goal to come into fruition. According to the traditional elder,

"we talked to parents, we talked to people that were willing to do this and we got a fairly good commitment... It was a lot of work. The first year of operation was done at the Longhouse cookhouse and at the people’s homes, until we finished this building. A lot of it was done by the people, by the community through fund raising. Everybody had a job to do. The wolf clan, our job was to do the building. Things that needed to be built we had to organize, mostly we had to work, work to get things done. The turtle clan took care of things on the larger scale, that is to look for funds, to look for support somewhere. Then we had the bear clan that kind of worked on the every day things, on a weekly basis. Particularly how we get the work done. Then we all helped out to get the work done, to
share knowledge, to share understanding, and that’s kind of how we started to develop”.

The curriculum for this learning centre is based on total immersion into the traditional teaching of the Great Law of the Iroquois, the Creation Story, the Code of Handsome Lake and the Thanksgiving Address.

So in 1987 a traditional educational centre called the TSI NI YU KWA LI HO:TÅ was opened to assist the Onyota’a:ka people in the retention of their traditional language, cultural values, beliefs and heritage.

From the perspective of a First Nation researcher, the educational history of the Onyota’a:ka Nation of the Thames, shows us that despite numerous hurdles and obstacles encountered throughout their Euro-Western school experience, they have learned to read, they have learned to write, they have learned to do arithmetic and they have survived. They have developed, and continue to develop, a bicultural background that will allow them to be all that they can be as they continue the cycle of life.
Present Profile of the School Staff at Onyota’a:ka

STANDING STONE SCHOOL

Supervisor: Non-Native 1

School Secretary: Community member 1

Junior Kindergarten - Grade Six

Teachers:
Community Member Classroom Teachers 2
Native Classroom Teachers 2
Non-Native Classroom Teachers 4
Native as a Second Language Teacher 1
Non-Native Special Ed Resource Teacher 1
Community member Physical Ed Teacher 1

Support Staff
Community Member Classroom Assistants 3
Community Member Tutor Escorts 5
Community Member Attendance Counsellors 2
Community Member School Maintenance 2
Community Member Education Administrator 1
Community Member Assistant Administrator 1

TSINIYUKWALIHO:TÂ (alternative school)

Director: Community Member 1
Administrator: Community Member 1

Teachers:
Community Member Classroom Teachers 3

Support Staff
Community Member Bus Driver 1
Chapter Five
Methodology

When I first heard about the Inside-out approach to psychology and research, my initial reaction was, "Oh sure, another ploy to try and convert me to yet another passing cure-all fad". But when I examined this qualitative approach to research and began to have first hand knowledge with the inside-out phenomenon of Research-as-Renewal my resistance to this practical theory was diminished and I was able to see and experience the benefits of this approach.

My previous experience with research has been with the Outside-in approach, so this new insight was like a breath of fresh air after a cooling and renewing spring shower. It was a tremendous relief to be able to view the researcher and the researched as having equity of expertise instead of the researcher as being the only one to know anything of value.

In using Hunt's (1992) model of Research-as-Renewal based on the Inside-out approach to psychology, it was important to go directly to the Onyota'a:ka people to gain the information and knowledge required to complete this study. For too long the views and opinions of the Native people have been rejected as inconsequential. The time has come for the voice of Native people to be heard.

In making this voice heard the qualitative approach to research was used. As Marshall and Rossman (1989) state, this approach can be used as a means for better understanding a complex social phenomenon. Lincoln and Guba (1985), also proponents of the qualitative methods, state that the naturalist
inquiry paradigm is a more flexible approach when dealing with multiple realities of the participants. According to Patton (1980) qualitative methods allow for longer responses and therefore more information pertaining to the feelings, thoughts and experiences can be presented. He stated that direct quotations from participants show "... level of emotion, the way in which they have organized their world, their thoughts about what is happening to them, their experiences, and their basic perceptions" (p.23).

This study, a journey of inquiry into the perspectives of Onyota’a:ka people and their personal learning experiences, is primarily descriptive and relies on the participants’ words as the primary data. Marshall and Rossman (1989) indicate that the qualitative interview allows the participants to describe their own understanding of events in their own terms.

During the preparatory period of gathering information I spoke to several Onyota’a:ka community members, all of whom were very interested in my research project. They were extremely helpful in providing me with names of people they felt would participate in a qualitative interview which would assist me in my search for an understanding of the Onyota’a:ka learning experiences. I had been given names of elders, leaders, parents, as well as junior and senior high school students. The sample population consisted of people agreeing to participate in an interview and are not a homogeneous group totally representative of the community. They were of both sexes, of differing ages, and reflected various socio-economic and educational backgrounds. The commonality between the participants
was that they all attended the day school system in the community even if it was for just the first few years of their school experience. I interviewed fourteen residents of Onyota’á:ka, as well as several other individuals whom I thought might be able to augment my growing knowledge base. These other individuals were involved in either the administration of the present school system or administration of the ongoing community affairs.

According to Hunt (1992), both the researcher and the researched are participants in the human venture. Therefore by working together we are more likely to uncover understandings which will be relevant to the human condition and contain practical value. I find the related quality of respect to be of great consequence as this is one of the major principles of the First Nations’ way of life.

Sharing, another fundamental principle espoused by the First Nations people, is also a feature of Research-as-Renewal. Seeing this value put forth as synergy of sharing where the researcher and researched are able to negotiate the intentions of the research by being open with each other is energizing to all participants in the human venture.

While reading Marshall and Rossman (1989) I came upon the section that deals with reciprocity and ethics. They say that

Qualitative studies intrude into settings as people adjust to the researcher’s presence. People may be giving their time to be interviewed or to help the researcher understand group norms; the researcher must plan to reciprocate. Where people adjust their priorities and routines to help the researcher, or even just tolerate the researcher’s presence, they are giving of themselves. The researcher is indebted and should devise ways to give time, feedback, coffee, attention, ... or some other appropriate gift.
As I spoke to a traditional leader in the Onyota’a:ka community I asked how I should reciprocate in this shared venture. His response was for me to give the gift of tobacco to the people who were willing to participate. Leather pouches were constructed and filled with tobacco to honour the people I felt would appreciate this type of gift. Other types of friendship gifts were constructed to honour some of the other participants, because, in my initial contacts with some of the people, they felt that the participants willing to work with me would not expect anything in return for their participation except the satisfaction of being able to help me with my studies.

Opening negotiations began with the participants by phone except in cases when I unexpectedly met the prospective participant somewhere in the community. At the time of initial contact I would explain the nature of my study and ask for their assistance in my educational inquiry.

The data collection technique used was in-depth interviewing as this allows the researcher to explore a few general topics to help uncover the participant’s meaning perspective, but otherwise respects how the participant frames and structures the responses (Marshall and Rossman 1989 p.82).

In the interviews conducted with the people I tried to follow the principles espoused by Theresa Tuccoro (1987). That is:

To do this work, you have to have feelings and love for the child [people]... When I go to interview, I have to know how to approach people. Some people I know, I can visit them right away. Others I don’t know so I go to visit once or twice just to get them comfortable with me. Some I don’t know how to approach so I get the help of the other Elders... In every interview you have
to put a relation type thing in it. I know when to interview. Before I interview I have to make me feel good first. If I’m not feeling good, I don’t interview anyone that day. I pray or see an Elder and wait until my mind is opened... you have to know the right place\time to begin. You don’t just jump in. You have to visit, make the other person comfortable. When that person is relaxed, you begin. Also, keep the language simple, never put yourself above someone else. It wouldn’t work. The interview has to be balanced. I watch the little things. If it is too serious, I joke and tease. As I begin, I have to put my knowledge, mind, and my feelings on the table. I have to come out with it. What I’m there for, what I’m trying to do, how I feel, everything. Then I have to really listen. Sometimes I have all my information and the person goes right on talking two hours more! Some of our people have never had anyone listen to them, someone they trust, to talk to. I just let them go on as long as they like, and when I leave they always say, "Come back again". This is the toughest, hardest job I ever had...It’s so amazing, this Indian way of life. (Quoted in Colorado 1988)

All the interview sessions were tape recorded and transcribed.

In the Native tradition the people were encouraged to advance to their highest potential. So too, in the Research-as-Renewal model, positive emphasis is one of the guiding precepts. It is important to know that a researcher’s optimistic, positive expectations are essential to discovering human potential by "accentuating the positive".

Arthur Solomon, a Nishnawbe spiritual teacher, states in one of his poems, that "learning was a continuous process from birth to death. It was a total continuity without interruption. Its nature was like a fountain that gives many colours and flavours of water and that whoever chose could drink as much or as little as they wanted to and whenever they wished".(p.79) It is wonderful to see that this First Nation traditional principle of continuity is also included in the Research-as-Renewal paradigm. Research, as a form of renewal, is like the continuous fountain
that gives many colours and flavours. Each researcher has the opportunity to draw on experienced knowledge to further the learning process through inquiry. It is this exploration that provides the opportunity for researchers to amplify and extend their experienced knowledge and understanding. The most useful point I find in Research-as-Renewal is the fact that I am able to work it from a personal point of view without feeling inferior or inadequate in my vision.

The new Three R’s in Research-as-Renewal was a way to help me to begin with myself to better understand my implicit theory of learning experiences and to get in touch with the phenomena by reflexivity.

Research-as-openness to surprise, one of the qualities of Research-as-Renewal, is like when we dip into a fountain of many colours and flavours that the Nishnawbe elder speaks about. We do not quite know what colour or flavour we will get, so it is important to be aware that things may not always be what we expect them to be. A sense of humour is necessary in times of surprise so that we can continue to balance any unanticipated factors.

Armed with the Research-as-Renewal approach to research I knew that there would be much information from my Onyota’a:ka colleagues as we explored the learning experiences that would give voice and renewed energy to the people.

Rationale

When I thought I had all the bases covered to continue on the path of my thesis journey I discovered that there was yet
another thing to do and that was to establish criteria that would validate this study. It wasn’t enough that the data came from the Onyota’a:ka people themselves for themselves but that the wider society be satisfied that the results of the study are trustworthy. In response to this issue Lincoln and Guba (1985) identified a major question that must be considered by researchers using the qualitative approach. The question is, "How can an inquirer persuade his or her audience that the findings of an inquiry are worth paying attention to, worth taking account of?" (p.290). They point out that "...the naturalist is at least as concerned with trustworthiness as is the conventional inquirer" (p.294).

Conventional research, otherwise known as quantitative research, uses internal validity, external validity, reliability, and objectivity to measure trustworthiness. Lincoln and Guba contend that the conventional measures to trustworthiness are "inappropriate to the naturalistic paradigm" (p.294); therefore they developed four alternative constructs to reflect trustworthiness - credibility, transferability, dependability and confirmability.

The goal of credibility is to demonstrate that the study was conducted in such a manner as to ensure that the subject was accurately identified and described. Therefore the study must be "creditable to the constructors of the original multiple realities"(p.296). Marshall and Rossman (1989) state that "the strength of the qualitative study that aims to explore a problem or describe a setting, a process, a social group, or a pattern of interaction will be its validity" (p.145). They go on to say
that an in-depth description showing the complexities of variables and interactions will be so embedded with data derived from the setting that it cannot help but be valid. They also state that within the parameters of that setting, population, and theoretical framework, the research will be valid (p.145). In this study the history of the educational system of the Onyota’á:ka people was documented to give an in-depth description of the schooling experienced by this community. The population sample consisted of various elders, grandparents, parents, and youth from different areas of the community. The data came from within the community to give it an inside-out approach, the bases of Research-as-Renewal.

Transferability, the second of Lincoln and Guba’s proposed constructs, states that the burden of proof pertaining to the applicability of one set of findings to another context rests more with the investigator who would make that transfer than with the original researcher.

Although a qualitative inquiry’s transferability or generalizability to other setting may be problematic, Marshall and Rossman (1989) suggest that the researcher can refer back to the original theoretical framework to show how data collection and analysis will be guided by concepts and models. An additional way to enhance a study’s generalizability is to triangulate multiple sources of data. According to Marshall and Rossman "data from different sources can be used to corroborate, elaborate, or illuminate the research in question" (p.146). The data in this research was derived from the examination of historical documentary sources, the Onyota’á:ka people themselves
as well as contemporary colleagues and researchers.

Dependability, the third construct, comes into play because of one of the underlying assumptions basic to qualitative research. In the naturalist inquiry dependability attempts to account for changing conditions as the research becomes more focused and proceeds toward more specific questions and clearer concepts. One of the ways Lincoln and Guba (1985) proposed that dependability could be found is to have an inquiry audit. An inquiry audit is where the individual responsible for conducting the audit would determine whether the results and conclusions of the study were supported by accurate data. This study was given to several community members and colleagues to review.

The last of the four proposed constructs by Lincoln and Guba (1985) is confirmability. This construct establishes that the information, the results and the explanation are supported by the data and are not simply reflections of researcher inclination or subjectivity. This is where Dr. Hunt’s quality of openness to surprise becomes a valuable tool which allows myself, the researcher, to avoid allusions of any preconceived feelings and beliefs about the Onyota‘a:ka learning experiences.

Marshall and Rossman (1989) state that qualitative research does not pretend to be replicable. They do say that a researcher can respond to this issue in the assertion that qualitative studies by their nature cannot be replicated because the real world changes. They also advocate that by keeping thorough notes and a researcher’s diary that records each research design decision and the rationale behind it builds in confirmability.
Chapter Six

Profiles of the Participants

Introduction

This chapter contains the profiles of the fourteen Onyot'a:ka individuals interviewed for this study. These participants were chosen because they were living in the community at the time of the interviews and each had attended the Onyot'a:ka school system at some time during their formal educational journey. They were also chosen because of their willingness to participate in the study. This group of interviewees comprised nine women and five men ranging in age from eighty-four to seventeen. The oldest participant started and attended school in the community before the 1920s and the youngest started school in the early 1980s. (See Table 1)

Each profile will include their birth year, a short description of their present activities as well as a short vignette about their formal school experiences. These participant profiles have been arranged in order of age starting with the eldest. The data collected from each participant will be considered together in the analysis chapter.

Participant A is a female born in 1909. She is a mother, a grandmother and also a great grandmother. The first interview took place March 19, 1993 at her home as did the second on September 24, 1993. This elderly lady resides in her own home with her eldest son. She was very friendly and informative during the time of our interviews. She continues to have tremendous energy and is still very active in many community
TABLE 1. Participant Profiles

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participants</th>
<th>Sex</th>
<th>DOB</th>
<th>Age started school</th>
<th>Year started school</th>
<th>School started</th>
<th>Present Age</th>
<th>Omyota's:ka Language</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
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<td>1921</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>C</td>
<td>F</td>
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<td>6</td>
<td>1926</td>
<td>No. 2</td>
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<td>Fluent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>6</td>
<td>1932</td>
<td>No. 3</td>
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<td>F</td>
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<td>6</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
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<td>6</td>
<td>1947</td>
<td>No. 2</td>
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</tr>
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<td>G</td>
<td>M</td>
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<td>6</td>
<td>1948</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>H</td>
<td>F</td>
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<td>6</td>
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<td>No. 1</td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>F</td>
<td>1946</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>1952</td>
<td>No. 2</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>Understands</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>J</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>1949</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>1955</td>
<td>No. 2</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>Fluent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>M</td>
<td>1950</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>1956</td>
<td>U.S.A</td>
<td>43</td>
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<tr>
<td>L</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>1973</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>1977</td>
<td>S.S.S</td>
<td>20</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>M</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>1975</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>1979</td>
<td>S.S.S</td>
<td>18</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>1976</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>1980</td>
<td>S.S.S</td>
<td>17</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
events although her health problems are starting to impinge on her life style. At the time of the first interview she said she would still go in to work occasionally on days when she felt like it. After the initial contact she said she would lie awake at night trying to remember what had happened in the early 1900s. She was quite concerned that I get the information that I needed to finish my project.

This participant started school in the community when she was eight years old. She went to residential school when she was thirteen and stayed there for seven years.

Participant B is a male born in 1913. He is a father, a grandfather and a great grandfather. His first interview was on Feb. 3, 1993 in his home. The second interview was on June 1, 1993 also in his home.

This participant is a very friendly and out-going person in the Onyota’a:ka community. He lives in his own home and has a homemaker who comes in daily to cook and clean. He said he appreciates that one of his granddaughters lives with him as she also helps him around the house. Even though he is retired he is still involved with many of the activities that are happening in the community. He said his hearing is getting worse so he is not able to do some of the things he would like to do. One of his favourite past-times was singing in the Onyota’a:ka language with the many different community choral groups.

Participant B started school when he was eight years old. He spent eight years in the Onyota’a:ka school system, but the first few years were very sporadic.

Participant C is a female born in 1920. She is the mother
of two sons. Both of the interviews were conducted in her home. The first one was on January 27, 1993 and the second one July 20, 1993.

Although this lady is very friendly she is more quiet and reserved in her way of interacting with others. She lives in her own home with her youngest son. You see her occasionally at community functions where she will always greet you with a smile. Even though she is not as out-going as some people are from the community she was very willing to share her story of her learning experience in the educational system at Onyota’a:ka.

Participant C started school at Number two when she was six years old. She spent most of her school years in the Onyota’a:ka school system except that when she was twelve she went one year to a school outside of the community. She returned to the Onyota’a:ka community and continued in the school system until she was fifteen.

Participant D is a female resident of the community. She was born in 1926. She is a mother, a grandmother and a great grandmother. Due to unfortunate timing only one interview was conducted with this participant. The interview took place on February 5, 1993 at her residence.

She has her own home and several of her children and grandchildren live with her on occasion. She is an active member of the community and attends many of the different functions that take place there. I have known this participant since I was "knee high to a grasshopper" so when I asked her if she would participate in my data collection she was quite willing to do an interview and share her learning experiences.
Participant D started at Number three school when she was six and went to residential school when she was eight years old. She stayed at the residential school until she was fifteen.

Participant E is a female born in 1930. She is a mother and grandmother. Only one interview was carried out with this participant and it took place on February 17, 1993.

This participant lives at Onyota’a:ka and has her own home. She still works as a domestic in one of the surrounding communities. She is actively involved in a number of activities within the Onyota’a:ka community. It was because of this high involvement that many of the community residents felt she would be able to contribute to the information gathering process of this thesis. Since she is very busy and hard to pin down to a time the researcher is very thankful to get this one interview completed.

Participant E started school in the spring before she turned six. She said she followed her older brother to school one day, so the teacher and her parents let her attend for the remainder of the spring term. When school started for the fall term she had turned six years old and was officially registered for the grade one class. She completed the Onyota’a:ka Day School program of grades one to eight then went on to a high school outside of the community where she had to board during the school week. She spent one year outside of the community, then the following year she attended the new high school program at the Mount Elgin Indian Day school across the river from the Onyota’a:ka community in the Chippewa community. She left school when she turned sixteen to go to work in a cookie factory.
Before the next six participants began their formal school journey there had been a shift in the way the community schools were set up. Now instead of the students going to grade eight at their respective neighbourhood schools they would only go to grade six then go across the river to the Mount Elgin Indian Day School for grade seven and eight. In grade nine the students would then be transported to the city of London to attend the pubic high schools in that city.

Participant F is a female born in 1941. She is the mother of two children. The first interview happened on February 8, 1993 and the second interview was on June 2, 1993.

This participant lives at Onyota’a:ka in her own home. She is highly committed to the educational system in her community. She participates in the education authority committee, the language committee and also does volunteer work with the students. She is very out-going and vocal in her communication and agreed quite readily to do an interview for this thesis.

Participant F started school when she was six years old at Oneida Number Two. She completed grades one to six at this location before continuing on into the next phase of education offered at the Mount Elgin Indian Day School. She finished grade seven and started into grade eight but was lured out into the working world before she finished. She did return to school and registered in an upholstery course where she learned the skills to pursue a career in upholstery.

Participant G is a male born in 1942. He is a father and a grandfather. There was only one interview conducted with this participant. This interview took place on January 8, 1993.
This participant came from a large family, four brothers and six sisters. He is the fourth oldest. At the time of this interview he was residing at the Onyota’a:ka community. He enjoys being involved with the many different activities in the community. He readily agreed to help me with my educational project.

Participant G started school at age six. His first school experience was at Number One school where he completed grade six before continuing on to the Mount Elgin Indian Day School on the Chippewa Reserve. At the Mount Elgin School he completed grades seven and eight then went on to complete grade twelve in the London secondary school system. Later as a mature student he returned to post secondary school and completed requirements to receive both a Bachelor degree and a Master degree.

Participant H is a female and was born in 1944. She is a mother and grandmother. Both of these interviews were conducted at her place of work. The first one was on March 2, 1993 and the second one on September 24, 1993.

This participant is the second oldest of seven children. She helped raise the younger ones in her family, raised her own family of six children and now works in the community in a helping profession. She is friendly and very assertive in her community involvement. She was quite willing to help with this thesis project by doing the two interviews that were requested.

Participant H started at Number One school when she was six years old. She also attended Mount Elgin Indian Day school but did not complete grade eight and so was unable to continue on the educational path to high school. She later returned to adult
upgrading to continue in the development of her academic skills.

Participant I is a female born in 1946. She too is a mother and a grandmother. The two interviews conducted with this participant were held at the home of the researcher. The first interview was held on March 30, 1993 and the second one was on June 2, 1993.

This participant also came from a large family. She is the third oldest of a family of fifteen children. She has spent most of her life at Onyota’a:ka and has become very involved in several of the community committees dealing with the day to day business of the Band Council. I have been acquainted with this participant since the early grades in school. Even with her busy schedule she was willing to participate in the two requested interviews for this thesis work.

Participant I started school at Oneida Number Two school when she was six years old. She completed grade six at this facility before moving on to the Mount Elgin Indian Day School where she completed grades seven and eight. She started in grade nine but due to unfortunate home circumstances she was not able to complete this grade at this time. Later she attended adult upgrading to obtain the academic background she felt she needed to help her children through the educational system.

Participant J is a male born in 1949. He is a father and grandfather living at the Onyota’a:ka settlement. The first interview was on September 27, 1993 and the second interview was August 26, 1995.

This participant is the second oldest in a family of seven. He spent his childhood in the Onyota’a:ka community. As a young
adult he left the community for a while to work in different parts of the country. He eventually moved back to the community to run his own construction business. From there he eventually became more actively involved in the learning experiences of the young people in the community. He was very gracious in his commitment to be involved in these two interviews needed for this study.

This participant started at Oneida Number Two School when he was six years old. He completed grade six there then continued at the Mount Elgin School to obtain his grades seven and eight. Although Participant J started high school in London he did not finish his formal education at this time. Later on when he was still working in the United States he returned to the formal educational process to get his GED diploma.

Participant K is a male born in 1950. He participated in the two interviews. Both interviews were held in his home. The first was on February 11, 1993 and the second was on June 9, 1993.

This participant is highly involved in the new educational system at Onyota’a:ka. He is also very committed to the language development program that is taking place at the Onyota’a:ka community. As well he participates in many of the other activities that happen in the community. He was very gracious in his response to the request for his participation in this thesis project.

Participant K was six years old when he started school. He was the one student who did not start school at Onyota’a:ka. He had a nomadic lifestyle. As a result of this his educational
journey shifted back and forth from Onyota'a:ka to the United States. In the end when he made his final move back to Onyota'a:ka the school authorities wanted him to attend grade eight at one of the county schools. He refused to attend grade eight. According to his school records from the U.S. he was about to finish grade eleven. He was eventually transferred to grade nine in the London school system where he stayed for a few months to get a handle on some of the trades being offered at the school.

As the last three participants started their educational program there had been another change in the system. Standing Stone School had been built and everything was centralized to this building. The children were starting school at age four and going to kindergarten one and kindergarten two before entering grade one.

Participant L, a young female student, was born in 1973. The first interview with this participant was on April 8, 1993 and the second one was on June 8, 1993.

Participant L was very talkative and out-going in her interview. She is the second child in a family of three. She lives with her grandfather in the community and is very active in her school situation. She was the president of the Native School Association in the school she attended for her last year in secondary school. At the time of the interview she was waiting for replies to the applications she had sent to various universities.

Participant L started school at Standing Stone School and spent her first three years of education there. Her family moved
to London, Ontario so the remainder of her elementary education was spent in the public school system in that city. She once again joined her Onyota’a:ka peers at secondary school.

Participant M is one of the younger males included in this study. He was born in 1975. His principle role at the time of the interviews was as a student. The first interview with this participant was at the Onyota’a:ka Band Administration Office. We met there after school. This interview took place on February 11, 1993. The second interview was conducted at his residence on July 22, 1993.

This participant is the oldest in a family of three children. He was living with his grandmother and aunt at the time of this interview. Participant M completed kindergarten one and two as well as grades one to four at Standing Stone School. He then went to one of the Middlesex county schools to complete his grade five classes. He found the work at this school much too difficult so he returned to Standing Stone School to complete his grade six. He went on to another county school to do his grade seven and eight and then continued on to a secondary school in London. At the time of this interview he was finishing up his grade twelve credits in order to graduate and continue into post secondary education.

Participant N is a female born in 1976. Her name was given by the school counsellor as one of the students to interview. Interview one took place on February 4, 1993 at the Onyota’a:ka Band Office. Interview two was completed on June 10, 1993 at her home.

This participant was very quiet and reserved during her
interview. She is the youngest child in a family of four. She had recently stopped attending the formal educational system and was home raising her little boy. When she was approached to participate in these interviews she readily agreed.

Participant N also started school at Standing Stone School. She completed her kindergarten experience here. The rest of her elementary education was completed in the Middlesex county school system. She joined her Onyota’a:ka peers at a secondary school in London and attended this school for two years.

**Overview: Eras of System Changes Experienced by Onyota’a:ka Students**

The school history covered in this study spans seventy-six years from 1917 to 1993. During this time span the Onyota’a:ka education system was managed by the Department of Indian Affairs and the Indian Act. When the federal government decided the Native people needed to be more controlled they would change the Indian Act to fit their vision. The first five participants experienced the 1910 Indian Act policy shift toward isolation. This meant that the Onyota’a:ka students were being educated to remain in their own communities rather than being educated to enter mainstream society. Actually there were two forces at work during this time period. The first was to assimilate so there would no longer be an Indian problem and the second was to isolate on reserves. Thus some of the students experienced the residential school setting of isolation for assimilation and others experienced the reserve school setting of isolation for assimilation controlled by the Department of Indian Affairs under the authority of the Indian Act.
In 1920 compulsory attendance was strengthened for students between the ages of seven to fifteen and in 1930 departmental powers were reinforced giving more authority to the Indian agent concerning Indian education. The next three participants began their educational studies at the end of this era just before another policy change with the revision of the Indian Act in 1951. This revision proposed that Native children be integrated into provincial public schools. Tuition agreements were made with the provincial schools and the high school students from Onyota’a:ka were bussed into London to continue their high school experience. Even though the Onyota’a:ka students were integrated into the provincial public schools they were still governed by the Indian Act.

Participants I, J, and K along with the researcher began their educational journey after the 1951 revision. Although these students were out of the school system before the next major policy change pertaining to Native education, this policy did have an impact on their education endeavours.

The next major shift in policy was in 1973 when the Department of Indian Affairs gave official recognition to the proposal of ‘Indian Control of Indian Education’ submitted by the National Indian Brotherhood. The last three participants L, M, and N attended school under this policy. Although there was an awareness that Native people needed to be able to control their own education they were still governed by the Indian Act.

The starting ages of the Onyota’a:ka school children are reflected in the policy changes. Participant A and B both started school at the age of eight before compulsory attendance
was intensified. Participants C to K fell under the compulsory attendance policy and they all started school when they were six years old. The last three participants started school when they were four years old. This was after the policy change of 'Indian Control of Indian Education'. In this policy the Native people wanted nursery schools and kindergartens to be part of the learning experience of their students.

In the document *Indian Control of Indian Education* the Native people also expressed the desire to have adult education programs available which would allow them to pursue education to another level if they so desired. Six of the participants as well as the researcher had the opportunity to experience various adult education programs and many have gone on to higher levels of education.
Chapter Seven
Results of the Interviews

Due to the diversity of educational experiences of the participants and changes in the school system, there are a number of different themes described as they recalled their personal journey of learning. Some of the themes that will be emphasized in this chapter are language, culture, formal education (teachers and teachings, including both Native and non-Native teachers), traditional education, traditional knowledge and values, and identity. Within these topics are many subsections. These subsections will be identified under each major heading. Also, their experience of each theme is different because of changes in the system.

Upon examining these various themes it was difficult to separate and compartmentalize each topic into specific categories. Consequently there are areas of overlap in some of the themes addressed.

Language

Language was found to be a major theme referred to by each participant except one. In this section the language theme will be divided into four subsections. The first section will deal with the family situations that promoted or that did not promote the learning of the Onyota’a:ka language. The second section will survey incidents relating to punishment for speaking Onyota’a:ka in school. Section three will consider how Onyota’a:ka speakers learned English in school. The fourth section will provide examples of how the Onyota’a:ka language was reintroduced into the school system and the consequence of doing
In this study eight of the participants were fluent Onyota‘a:ka speakers when they started school. These participants are A, B, C, D, F, G, J and K. Participants A, B, C, D and K said that when they started school they spoke only Onyota‘a:ka and did not know any English. Participants E, H, L, M, and N did not speak the Onyota‘a:ka language when they started school.

Language Promotion in the Family

The parents and grandparents of the fluent participants spoke the Onyota‘a:ka language and therefore promoted the use of this language to their children. Participant D gives us an example of this when she related that her mother was a well-educated woman in the Euro-western education system, but she made sure that the Onyota‘a:ka language was transmitted to the next generation. Participant D said:

She [my mother] never taught me how to talk English. She was afraid that I would lose my language and our Indian way . . . Because she heard many years ago, when she was small that that’s what the white people come here for, for us to lose our ways.

Even though the language was important to Participant D she became entangled in the environment around her and eventually the traditional language within her immediate family was not being maintained. Participant D thought, because she was aware of the prophecy pertaining to language loss, she would be able to make sure her children retained the language and could continue to pass it on to the next generation. But such was not the case. She said:
I [thought I] would never lose my language. I never ever wanted to. Today that's how I brought my kids up. But as they got smaller [meaning the younger children], even me I was talking English to them. I got two that hardly understand . . . one understands little bit. Two others understand everything. The [two oldest] boys, of course they speak the language. It seems like, I never thought it would happen to my kids. But it did. I feel kind of hurt because that's the way it went.

According to the results of this study only two of the eight fluent speakers were able to pass the language on to some of their children. Participant D's experience with her immediate family members pertaining to Onyota'a:ka language usage seems to be a reflection of the community as a whole. The younger generation do not know the language or know very little of it.

Situations That Did Not Promote Language

Participants E and H do not speak or understand the original language. Participant E stated that her mother was strapped for speaking the language at residential school so she would not promote or teach it to her children. As for Participant H, both of her parents attended the residential school at Mount Elgin, and they didn't teach their children the language either.

The researcher of this project was also one of the Onyota'a:ka members who did not inherit the Onyota'a:ka language. Her parents witnessed the punishment that was inflicted on the students who spoke their own language. They did not want their children to suffer the same treatment so they made sure that the children were able to converse only in the English language.

In more recent years, after the Onyota'a:ka language class had been introduced to the school system at Standing Stone
School, there was a reluctance on the part of some parents to have their children participate in these activities. Participant N tells us "I went to a different school because my parents didn’t want me to go to Standing Stone." In other cases the parents or guardians refused to have their children attend the language class because they felt that the Onyota’a:ka language was irrelevant and useless; it would not help the children learn to get a job.

The results of treatment received at both the residential school and the reserve schools pertaining to language were that many of the parents, the products of these schools, would not teach the language to their children.

**Punishment for speaking Onyota’a:ka in school.**

Participant A spoke only Onyota’a:ka until she was thirteen years old and went to residential school. She said:

You know I didn’t know how to speak English until I went to that Brandon Manitoba [residential] school. There was ES, we talked Oneida. And if we get caught talking to each other in Oneida we would get a strapping.

The prevailing belief of the residential school administrators was that if the language was removed from the Native children they would more easily assimilate into the dominant society.

Although residential schooling has a strong negative reputation for dealing harshly with students who spoke their own language, so too does the community day schooling that most of the Onyota’a:ka students attended. Participant B also made reference to his language experience as:

If the teacher finds out that we talk Indian, we get the strapping. We get licking. That’s the way he said it for us Indians.
Participant C says of her language experience:

Well we were told not to speak Oneida at school, but we couldn’t speak English so what were we supposed to do? I just didn’t talk at all.

Participant C doesn’t explicitly say that she was physically punished for speaking the language, but there seemed to be an implicit threat to her well-being if she spoke it; so she chose to retreat to the world of silence.

Although the parents of Participant I both spoke the language fluently, and her older siblings also spoke the language fluently she had to choose a different path. Participant I understands everything that is spoken in the Onyota’a:ka language, but she does not speak it herself. Her language ability was suppressed when she started school, and her father was unable to protect her from the violence inflicted upon her when she tried to communicate. She said:

To speak your [own language], you were hit in the mouth. That happened to me a lot of times. So eventually, my father who was teaching a lot of that wasn’t there to back me up, so after awhile, I said, the heck with that, I’m not going to learn the language. So I’m still stuck there today. I can understand it but it’s really hard for me to speak it.

Although many students suffer the unpleasant memories of being subjected to the removal of their language, others were able to cope in the system and use strategies to retain their integrity. Participant F also recalls memories of her early school education; she related her experience with the language.

I can never remember getting a strap in school. ... [but] I remember we couldn’t talk it in school, because we were told right off the bat [not to]. But, when we were in the playground, we all spoke it, without the teacher hearing us.

Several of the earlier students also mentioned how they had
to become devious in ways of using their traditional verbal communication skills in the playground so that they could talk to each other in comfort without having to go through the process of translating their thoughts to a foreign language in every interaction. It became almost like a game of 'Who can talk Onyota'a:ka without getting caught.' If someone was talking and the teacher was coming, the whisper went around "Here she comes!" and everyone would be real quiet until she left the area; so no one would get punished.

Participant K also speaks about how he was punished in the Onyota'a:ka community school for speaking his language. He started school in the States where they were more tolerant of first language speakers. He says "but soon as we came back to Oneida, the system tried to take it out of me, my own language. I've been strapped for it. But now they're taking it out of me again. But they're using money. They're using me to make our fluent speakers into greater numbers again."

Reintroduction of the Onyota'a:ka Language into the School System and the Results

In the late 1960s a few of the Onyota'a:ka people began to realize the value of retaining their language. Participant F, one of the community members interested in the education of the students, tells how the Onyota'a:ka language came to be introduced into the community schools. She says:

We had a meeting at Mt. Elgin school, when the old building was still there. Before it burned down, well DIA [Department of Indian Affairs] were there, Chippewa, Muncey, Oneida they had a meeting there. I really pushed for Oneida Language.

So with the force and faith of people like Participant F the language was introduced into the school system as a language class in hopes that it would help to arrest the erosion of this cultural vehicle.

Participant M, one of the students who had the opportunity to experience the Onyota'a:ka language phenomenon in the school
system, gives his reaction to the attempt of retaining the language through the formal educational system. He says:

I think they should look at the curriculum, because French is taught, they should do exactly the same thing. Because in two years of county school, I learned more French than I did Oneida. In just two years, I learned more than I learned in eight years here [Onyota'a:ka]. And I can still remember it. I still know lots of French. I didn’t like it. I didn’t want to learn it. It was just the way they taught.

Much more work needs to be done to revive the language because to date the system used to convey the language through the school curriculum has not assisted greatly in language retention. Why? Is it more than language teaching that is surfacing here? For many years the Onyota’a:ka have been exposed to the ways of the non-Native teachers and have learned to accept the ways that have been thrust upon them. Have they been so totally ingrained with Euro-western ways of doing things that they no longer respect the ways of the Onyota’a:ka; that they cannot learn from their own people anymore?

Although there are many problem that need to be resolved in the Onyota’a:ka language curriculum system, Participant K says:

In my lifetime, it’s important for me to see that our language goes on, because to me, that’s what makes us that special people.

In the early 1980s there had been a resurgence of the traditional ways at Onyota’a:ka and at this time parents in different areas of the community were beginning to feel and grieve the loss of their mother tongue. The Longhouse participants of this community grew tired of just talking and lamenting over the loss of language, so they began to organize and develop ways to revitalize in the wake of the Onyota’a:ka
language crisis. Participant J stated:

In 1985 we started discussing what we were going to do because our language was getting lost so rapidly. We could see that it was going to take something. I don’t know what the word is but we were going to have to do something so that we would just deal with the situation. Where we had to do something that was kind of a goal for us.

From these initial discussions Participant L said that they went on to create an immersion school. This teaching facility is known as the Tsy ni yu kwa li ho:tl, the place where they teach "our ways." Here they teach the language to the students and now they also have language classes for the parents of these children. Participant J tells us that in order to retain the language, both the children and the parents need to learn it so that there is continuity between the home and the school to make Onyota’a:ka a living language that carries the significance, magnificence, and the spirit of the people.

Culture

Participant I gives us an understanding of what culture is as she learned it:

It’s an everyday thing. It’s not like a religion, where you know, just certain hours. Where with him [her father] it is everyday, it’s an everyday thing. It’s a way of life. That’s what he understands his culture to be, a way of life.

The culture of a society is what ensures its unity and survival. The values, beliefs, history and customs form the basis of the attitudes, behaviours, and understandings that make up the heritage that individuals learn. Although a living culture is constantly changing and adapting to situations encountered, it still contains principles that are intrinsic to a particular group of people. The results of this study show us
that there has been much change in the way they live.

Lack of Traditional Knowledge and Customs in the Community Schools

The traditional knowledge and customs of the Onyota’a:ka curriculum were not a part of the formal educational system once the non-Native teachers were hired in the early years. When queried about whether traditional Native culture and values were taught in the classroom, Participant C replied:

Oh no, there was no such thing. They were trying to get us to forget it [Native culture]. They weren’t trying to teach us.

Participant I gives us an example of clashes of home and school cultures.

I found it really hard going through the school. Lot of stuff, my father for instance, he was supposed to be teaching us lot of that stuff [traditional knowledge and customs]. At the same time my mother went through that educational system. She had her grade thirteen and that. And she tried to encourage us in school all the time. We were constantly being pulled between these two, eh, between our parents. To me it seemed that way, my dad wanted us to be doing this and doing that. Like around the house we had responsibilities, eh, as girls in that family, helping our mother. My mother on the other hand, she always wanted us in school to learn and learn and learn. I thought we were caught up, for me, constantly all the way through that school. There was always the constant decision should I go to school today or maybe I’ll go tomorrow, ‘cause I know that laundry’s piling up, stuff like this, you know. Whereas those longhouse ceremonies, and that’s where we were suppose to be, getting ready for ceremonies and that. It was kind of hard.

It sounds like it must have been a difficult situation because on the one hand Participant I knew what was expected of her at home but when she went to school she had to "learn and learn and learn" foreign material. For what purpose? Participant I said:

As long as I read the book and went by the book I was an A-Student.
They put that book in front of you and all they wanted out of you was your version of what is put in front of you. That’s all they wanted.

Just rewrite it. Other than that there was nothing of you in there. It was kind of an empty, an empty education compared to learning this other way, like learning how to survive. Not just to survive but responsibility. Like we have to keep the house clean, keep the laundry. Stuff like that, that stuff is forever too, eh.

Prior to 1973 it seemed this was basically the kind of education that the Onyota’a:ka children received.

The Lack of Aboriginal Content in the School System.

In the early 1900s there was a lack of Aboriginal content in the school curriculum. What was there was either a very negative or a romanticized version of the Aboriginal people of North America. By the mid 1950s and early 1960s this situation in the formal education system had not changed much. Participant K stated:

On the reserve here, there was nothing here. We had social studies. We had history, but it was never related to anything, to Native people . . . It was always when Columbus came over. When Marco Polo sailed around the world [sic] and all these things. But nothing about what the Native People done. There wasn’t nothing.

As reported in this interview there was only Euro-western content taught during the early part of the 1960s. There was nothing that reflected Native ways.

Introduction of Aboriginal Content

In the mid 1970s and early 1980s Participant F was actively involved in community school activities. She remembers specifically attending a meeting pertaining to the school curriculum where she asked for:
. . . Native Studies. They [the Department of Indian Affairs] said we couldn't have it because their curriculum was already set. I told them you got social studies, science. I don't want to learn about people in Australia, or Korea. I want to learn about myself. About my people, so we argued, but it ended up the following September they had it in there, Native Studies.

Participant M was one of the students who had the benefit of studying after this earlier encounter between Participant F and the Department of Indian Affairs. His response to learning Native content was:

It seemed like we always use to talk about stories. Like myths, legends and stuff like that. It was always interesting to me.

These later students were the recipients of curriculum that had begun to change the face of Native education. In recent years the Onyota'a:kwa students have begun to search for undergraduate programs that allow them to continue their interest in learning about Native ways. Participant L relates her understanding about what happens when you continue to learn through Native content. She says:

in Native Studies you learn about the communities, different things like that. It's not only the communities you learn about, but its the spirituality.

The Native Studies content has enabled some of the students to start to pull together the underlying principles that make them who they are.

The Lack of Aboriginal Values in the School System.

Values are an important aspect of a culture. A major value in the Native community is cooperation. It is only with cooperation that the Aboriginal people have been able to survive
the many thousands of years that they have occupied Turtle Island.

Participant J told how the customs and values were changed through the formal educational system. He specifically talks about the value of cooperation and how it changed. He states:

When I went to school I was always taught to be somebody else, not to be me. And I was always taught to be better than somebody else. And I was always taught to be smarter than somebody else. And so, when you’re taught that way and when you’re conditioned that way, that’s the way you are, you won’t share what you know because you don’t want them to be as smart as you. And that’s normal under those conditions, that’s what you’ll do. So if you figure out how to do this in math or you figure this out, then you kind of sit back and let everybody else figure it out. And if they don’t, they’re not as smart as you. And if they do then it scares you then you try harder to be smarter. So there’s always this competition but, in our society it’s not competition, it’s helping each other.

So Participant J tells us that, rather than being taught to cooperate with each other, the children in the Onyota’a:ka schools were taught to compete with each other. They were taught the values of the Euro-western education curriculum system which puts a great deal of stress on competition.

In the Euro-western system one of the basic principles of the curriculum is meritocracy. This is where only the brightest and the best students get recognition. Participant I shows how she felt a student had to get recognition in the Euro-western school setting. She said:

It was already all set, you just followed that road and you were an A-1 student as long as you did as you were told in that school, in that school time, in that school hours.

She goes on to say that there was no recognition of the knowledge she had about who she was in the Onyota’a:ka community. She
states:

...When it came to our culture, my education part, it was never taught in the schools.

In the Onyota’a:ka community the prevailing values in the Onyota’a:ka culture were overlooked in the formal school system. The values that became dominant were the ones brought in by the Euro-Western educated teachers.

Cultural Impact in Local School Versus Other Schools.

By the time Participant M entered the formal educational system at Onyota’a:ka, there was some change in what was being taught to the children about their own community. In the early 1970s the grade two teacher started to gather information about the Onyota’a:ka community. As one of her strategies she looked within her own classroom to find the necessary information. She had one of the grade two students invite her father to come and speak to the class about the history of the Onyota’a:ka community.

The talk was tape recorded, transcribed and has been taught to incoming students since that time. The data gathered at that time was about information that began a journey of rediscovery concerning the people of Onyota’a:ka and another way of thinking about Native people. Participant M says of his classroom experience:

It seemed like we always use to talk about stories. Like myths, legends and stuff like that.

There has been much change in the formal community education system since the inception of Onyota’a:ka content and culture. The students now have something to identify with. Including
Onyota’a:ka information in the formal curriculum opened a place within the Euro-western educational system for Onyota’a:ka students to work from.

Participant N was one of the students who received the major portion of her formal education away from the Onyota’a:ka community, in other school board areas. When she was detailing her learning experience, she stated that her social studies was about the world, and different cultures. She stated that she didn’t study her own community, "just like Asia . . . different continents". Upon further inquiry into the study of her own community her response was that she studied, "Just Indians, like it didn’t matter what kind. Just Natives." From the responses of these two participants we can see that there has been a great deal of change in what the students are learning about their own people in the Onyota’a:ka community as opposed to schools outside of the community.

Impact of Local Control on the Cultural Curriculum of the Schools

Just as the elementary students in the community have been given the opportunity to know more about themselves within the local school system, so too have the secondary school students who attend the London Secondary Schools where Tuition Agreements are in place. Now students can take both Native Studies and the Onyota’a:ka language in the secondary school system in the city of London. As well there are Native student associations in the schools which promote more Native cultural activities. Participant L said of her 1992-93 school year:
I was the President of the Native Students Council this year. The first thing I said was, "We are going to have a Pow Wow." And I started telling people "We’re going to have a Pow Wow this year." We invited other schools, the public schools, and the three schools down here. And then some public schools in London, and the high schools too, like Beal and Thames, we invited students from there too.

Local input into educational concern has opened up the door for students to be more involved with activities that are based in their own culture. They can take these activities and share them with the wider society to help all non-Native people become more aware of Native people who do have many important things to share.

**Culture within an Alternative School System**

In the middle 1980s, through their initial discussions of what was happening to their traditional cultural ways, the people of the Longhouse discerned that they were talking about more than just the loss of language. They knew the language was an integral part of a way of life and if they were going to preserve the language they would also have to revitalize the Onyota’a:ka world view. Participant J said:

> We always talked about we need to start our own school. We always talked about that we needed a place and it’s not necessarily a school but a learning place where we could teach our children our ways.

Participant J tells us this place, this school, was opened in 1986 and now the children are once again learning the traditional values of the Onyota’a:ka people. He goes on to say that the children are learning to respect each other as individuals and to respect those around them. They are learning the responsibilities and duties they will have as men and women of the Onyota’a:ka society.
Participant J says that at Tsi ni yu kwa li ho:tA they are learning traditional customs of the Onyota’a:ka people. They are learning the traditional ceremonies and medicines that are used to keep the society in balance. They are learning the traditional songs and dances that give meaning to the stories and teachings of the traditional way of life. He says at this school they are learning the traditional beliefs of the Onyota’a:ka people. They are learning that as Aboriginal people we have always existed on Turtle Island. He says at this school they teach that according to our creation story we are descendants of the Sky World people, born here on Turtle Island from our Grandmother Skywoman and therefore we did not come wandering over across the Bering Strait.

Participant J said at the Tsi ni yu kwa li ho:tA the students are learning the Thanksgiving Address which teaches us about our relationship and our place in creation alongside all other creations. They are learning the Great Law which was given by the Creator through the messenger, Peacemaker, and his speaker Hiawatha. They are also learning the teachings from the Code of Handsome Lake which was developed by a Seneca Prophet, Handsome Lake, of the late eighteenth and early nineteenth century. Handsome Lake was instructed to renew the message from the Creator that would assist the Iroquois people to practise the Creator’s original teachings again. The students of this alternative school system are learning the teachings of "our ways" (our Neha) through the use of the Onyota’a:ka language.
Formal Education: Teachers and Teachings

In the formal education journey of the participants some encountered both Native and non-Native teachers. Three were fortunate to have had the opportunity to study under the tutelage of Onyota’a:ka scholars. Participants A, B and G each related their experiences with an Onyota’a:ka teacher.

Participant A recalls positive experiences with Onyota’a:ka teachers, but she also recalls that the teaching tools and methods used in the classroom were not conducive to a good learning experience. Participant A remembered the difficulty of trying to take notes during her lessons. She said:

You got a little slate with a chalk, you write that down when he starts telling you things. Well you try to put it down. When he’s done telling you, he rubs the thing off on the board and you got to rub yours off too and you don’t have nothing.

Participant A was instructed by two Onyota’a:ka teachers. Both teachers spoke the Onyota’a:ka language which was probably why she didn’t learn to speak English until she went to residential school where she came in contact with teachers from the Euro-western society. There were non-Native teachers in the Onyota’a:ka community at the time she was a student here but she did not have the opportunity to interact with them.
Local School versus Residential School Experience

Participant A was in for a rude awakening when she arrived at the residential school in 1922. In the Onyota’a:ka community she said, "The trouble is we didn’t go to school steady. Whenever we had clothing good enough to go to school, [we] were sent to school." In those days there was no financial assistance from the government to help out the people who were in need. She said, "There’s nothing, just whatever the parents earned, that’s what they got to live on." Even though the times were tough there was a gentleness and caring attitude in her family. At that time her father became very ill which made it even more difficult to make ends meet so when he asked if any of his children would like to go to the residential school out west she, her brother and her sister chose to go to the far away school in Manitoba. Her reaction now to this experience was:

Yep, that’s suppose to be Christian School. No Christian about it to me. They were kinda mean. Well they feed us an all that. We just didn’t get the right food we should get. Like the boys were so hungry they’d steal turnips or anything that they could eat, wheat. And if they were caught they made them eat it at the table. They put all wheat in their dishes and put water in it. That’s what they had to eat. They didn’t give them food to eat.

From the inception of the Onyota’a:ka settlement, Christianity had been an integral part of the Onyota’a:ka community of the Thames. In 1840 the main leaders of the Onyota’a:ka migration to Canada were Methodist and the Church of England adherents. The Christian principle of love was experienced throughout the community. This went hand in hand with the traditional ways of keeping balance within the community. The community school teachers were also Christian and
practised these principles; therefore when Onyota’a:ka students went to these Christian residential schools they were expecting to receive the same kind of Christian love and respect that they learned and shared at home. But such was not the case.

A horrendous culture clash came into play when Participant A chose to help out her family by attending the residential school. She no longer had the security of her family near by. The food that was served at this school was different than what she had been accustomed to and it was not filling. The punishment that the boys received for trying to get enough to eat was often very humiliating. Participant A said:

They put all wheat in their dishes and put water in it. That’s what they had to eat. They didn’t give them food to eat... They make you stand up on the bench. How do you get to eat? Bend down if you’re that hungry.

Life at the residential school setting was very difficult for many of the students that attended these facilities.

Different values and different expectations would lead to a different way that would be passed on to the next generation. Participant A did not teach her children the language nor did she teach them the Christian values that were a predominant part of the Onyota’a:ka culture. Her children were not explicitly taught the traditional ways either. Although the residential schools trained the students to work in service jobs, they did not train the students to have traditional parenting skills or to pass on the Native traditional ways of living. The values Participant A learned at residential school taught her to work. Participant A at the age of eighty three would still go to town to do house cleaning for her employer.
Community Schooling - Interaction with both Native and non-Native Teachers

In the early 1900s the Onyota’a:ka community had two schools which the children attended. These schools were called Oneida Number Two and Oneida Number Three. During this early time period there were both Native and non-Native teachers involved with the school system. Although none of the participants of this particular study attended Oneida Number Three school during this early part of the century, some of the older participants remember that an Onyota’a:ka community member taught there in 1914 to 1915. After the departure of this Onyota’a:ka teacher from his position the incumbent teachers were non-Native people.

Participant B was instructed by one of the last Onyota’a:ka teachers at Number Two School. Participant B was taught by an Onyota’a:ka teacher until 1925. This was when he resigned as the teacher from Oneida Number Two School. Participant B stated that when he had the Onyota’a:ka teacher, "Sometimes we speak Indian and sometimes we speak English". There didn’t seem to be a hard and fast rule for either language.

When the Onyota’a:ka teacher left, the teaching position at Number Two School was filled by a non-Native lady from the St. Thomas area. Her background and values were quite different from those of the previous Onyota’a:ka teacher. Here Participant B says, "Once she hit me in the back of the head I know that she means it. So I got to be good". Fear of punishment may have become one of the motivating factors that forced the students to learn what the teachers wanted them to learn. But also involved was the underlying principle of respect for older people that was
instilled in the Onyota’a:ka young child. So with this respect
the students submerged some of their Onyota’a:ka ne ha.
Onyota’a:ka ne ha, meaning their spirit and the way they lived.

Participant G’s teacher was the daughter of one of the
former Onyota’a:ka teachers. Her name, while she was teaching
this participant, was Mrs. Virginia Schuyler. She later
remarried and became Mrs. Virginia Summers. In 1966 she became
the first woman to be an elected Chief Councillor in an Iroquoian
community. She had followed in the footsteps of her father to
teach the Onyota’a:ka children. Participant G, one of her former
students, had a positive relationship with her as his teacher.
He says:

Oh, she was a very good person, encouraging, as I look
back now.

He remembers only having her as his teacher for a couple of
years, then after that he had all non-Native teachers. As
Participant G continued to recall his experience with his other
teachers, he stated of his grade seven teacher:

Oh, well that’s when I came into contact with [an
interesting teacher]. She taught science in a new,
really interesting way, I thought. She used her farm
as a model. She talked about her farm. She gave
examples, stuff like that. Always trying to get us to
interact. I could understand where she was coming from
a lot, because I had grown up on a farm. Things that
she did and said increased my feeling for our farm
here. It was interesting. She hit the old nail right
on the head many times. She was interesting and a good
teacher.

Participant G remembers with fondness the interaction with
both the Native and non-Native teachers. All through his school
years he found joy in learning whatever he was taught by the
system. But in retrospect he said he realizes that his
Onyota’a:ka ne ha was suppressed by the view that Euro-western education was the best course of action to be able to survive in the society of his school years.

Participants L, M and N all had Onyota’a:ka teaching assistants helping the non-Native teachers in the classroom. They also had an Onyota’a:ka language teacher who came in daily for one period of the day to teach them the Onyota’a:ka language. The other seven participants were all instructed solely by non-Native teachers. The result of having non-Native teachers in the community was that the students were introduced to a new set of information values, a new set of beliefs, and a new set of customs, everything that would have an impact on the future culture of the Onyota’a:ka people.

Learning Experiences of the Different Teaching Methods

The participants that came through the Onyota’a:ka school system referred to different kinds of teaching that they experienced.

When Participant B was asked where he learned English his reply was "at school." He went on to say, "And I didn’t learn too much in English when I’m at school until I got down to work for white man in the Shedden district. That’s how I got my English. Talked English a long time." Participant B said he learned English through the school subjects like reading, spelling and arithmetic.

Participant C also learned English through her school subjects. She says:

I did learn to read. That is I learned to read the
words but I didn’t understand what it meant.

Participant D recalls memorizing words in her very early formal school situation. She said:

I memorized. I’d go home and say, "To:to, there C-A-T is the cat, D-O-G is the dog." I remember those. It’s memorized. I would say that in English, but I really didn’t know what I was saying, till I was at the school at Mount Elgin [residential school] and I thought, how did I do that, how did I memorize that when I was small, C-A-T cat?

Participant K spoke only Onyota’a:ka when he started school in the States. He said:

I did two years in kindergarten, because I didn’t speak English. They finally brought my brother in, to go to school with me. Because they felt that would help me to learn and it would help him to learn. But when he got there, they found it different because, then I had somebody to talk to. And they still couldn’t get me to talk English. So they split us up. They put us into two different rooms. But then we’d go visit each other. We’d just get up and walk out of the room and go. So they finally just moved both of us to grade two, to start reading, so we could learn English. But it was never a problem for us at the school ... 

It seems as though these Onyota’a:ka speakers could do English work by rote memorization and constant repetition, but did not really learn it until it had to be applied.

In some cases the participants thought the way they were taught was helpful and useful; others could not find real relevance to what they were supposed to be learning as Participant C said:

I did learn to read. That is I learned to read the words but I didn’t understand what it meant.

With the ensuing contemplation of her school learning experience she stated that:

Well I did learn to read and do arithmetic and spelling and words. I learned spelling you know. Cause we use to have tests in spelling and I learned how. I was a pretty good speller. I learned every thing the way I
was supposed to [laughter] like a robot I guess. I think the teacher taught every thing she or he was supposed too, to each class. I think they done a pretty good job, with the different classes to teach. They kept us all busy.

The experience of Participant C demonstrates that she learned the fundamentals of reading, writing, and arithmetic the basics of school education. She did learn to decode but without comprehension. This may be an indication of reading material which was not relevant to her background as was the case in most reading programs where the reading material was from the Euro-western middle class society that was foreign to the students living in rural isolated areas.

If she learned it through the usual teaching techniques of rote, recite, and repetition then it becomes a robotic way of learning as she indicated by saying "I learned every thing the way I was supposed to [laughter] like a robot I guess." So probably because of the language and the culture difference between her and the teacher she practised memorization without application. Later on when she did go out to work in the non-Native society the fundamentals of her education program allowed her to become more proficient in her reading and speaking in the English language.

Participant I provides us with another example of robotic learning from a particular type of teaching technique. She says:

I know that as long as I read the book and went by the book I was an A-Student. They put that book in front of you and all they wanted out of you was, your version of what is put in front of you. That's all they wanted. Just rewrite it eh. Other than that there was nothing of you in there. It was kind of an empty education compared to learning this other way, like learning how to survive, not just to survive but responsibility.
Children are active learners. They want to become involved with their learning experiences. Being a passive recipient of what Freire (1990 p.58) calls banked knowledge is difficult when you want to be able to experience what you are learning. 'Banked knowledge' may be good for future use in some situations but if you never use it, it becomes empty education as Participant I calls it.

Some Onyota’a:ka students have had different learning experiences resulting from the various teaching techniques used by the different teachers. Participant F gave us an example of some positive teaching methods she experienced. She says of her teacher:

She use to do opera. Like we did that once a month. We went to the fairgrounds and, you know, all the parents would come there. And I know we had to study hard. We had to take some of our noon hour, but I think everybody really appreciated that we had these operas. She had these musical instruments too that we had to learn. Like little drums, another she called kluk kluk, and those triangles. We had to learn how to do music. So to me that is really important. I remember when [the teacher] use to take us for a walk, you know, up behind Abram’s, up that gully. She use to show us different kinds of leaves, when they came out. Skunk cabbage grew back there. Sweet flagg, like, we really went for walks back there. That was educational.

In this example, active student participation was a major principle of this teaching method. The students learned to do drama, they learned to sing, they learned to play musical instruments, they went on hikes and they learned about the natural environment around them. They were not confined to the drudgery of being passive receptacles sitting at their desks.

It seems as if there was a common respect between the teacher and her students so that these kinds of activities could
happen. In the active learning situations even the parents were involved in the learning activities of their children when they would come out to view the activities of the children. The basic fundamentals of reading and spelling became relevant to these pupils because in order to participate they needed to be able to read and write of their experiences that they participated in which made reading and writing relevant because it was personalized. So although the teacher used different strategies to teach her students the children also used different strategies to learn.

**Student Strategies for Learning**

Participant H relates learning strategies she used during her early school experience. She says:

> When I went to school, they tried to teach me to read and I couldn’t read. Then they found out what I knew. I knew it from memory. I spent three years in grade one, trying to learn how to read. I couldn’t read, but I knew all the stories, all off by heart.

Participant H used a global approach to learning the information contained in the books that were given to her. She listened and repeated back the information that she heard but when it came to starting with the sounds and symbols, the building blocks of a concrete sequential way of learning, she was unable to process in that particular way, so she strategized and learned the whole story rather than the bits and pieces of the formal educational way of learning.

Why did it take three years to get out of grade one? Why did it take so long to recognize that this child was not operating in the expected concrete sequential way of learning? In order to teach this child the way the teacher wanted her to
learn, in little bits and pieces at a time, the teacher had to change her reading material. She says:

They took my readers away from me. I had to use the ‘Tom and Jerry’ books, ‘cause I didn’t know those stories. So I had to learn. But I really didn’t learn how to read until I learned how to read comic books. That’s where I learned how to read.

In a comic book each cell is a whole unit unto itself. By understanding the whole picture and realizing that the balloons contained the words of the animated figures, she was able to make sense of the symbols that became the talk and words of the characters. These words could then be transferred to other reading material that was characteristic of the curriculum at the time.

Participant K also demonstrates a learning strategy that helped him meet the demands of the teacher.

Because I’m so slow to read and I guess to read and talk in English. I had to learn real quickly everything I had to know. Whatever they were teaching so they didn’t have to keep explaining it to me. I didn’t want to be centred out or anything like that because I couldn’t understand English. So I worked hard in school to learn everything that I could.

The students in the Onyota’a:ka school system worked hard to strategize so they could meet the expectations of the curriculum being taught to them. But some times it was difficult when the way of learning and the way of teaching were at odds with each other.

In speaking to a non-Native colleague about the learning experience of the Onyota’a:ka, I was informed that these students didn’t seem to have been pushed to learn very much in the school system. Even if non-Native people continue to think that the students were not pushed very hard to learn anything, the Native
students who came through the system believe they tried hard to work with the instructors that were available. The students developed and used strategies to 'fit' into the kind of teaching that was required by the curriculum.

Curriculum Factors

The curriculum in each era that students attended school played a major role in the experiences of the students. As Hesch (1995:183) states, one of the underlying principles of the curriculum used in schooling was and still is the canonical curriculum. Hesch (1995) states that canonical curriculum refers to the historical practice by governments of excluding [Indigenous] people's lived culture [and language] from the school curricula. This is the type of curriculum that the Onyota'a:ka students were exposed to. Participant E gives us an example of this type of curriculum. Participant E was one of the students who did not have the opportunity to learn her own language, but she was certainly introduced to other languages during her school experience. Of her high school experience at Mount Elgin Indian Day school she said, "They had French and Latin, and that was really hard." She continued:

We had to take all those subjects there. You didn't have a choice like they have now-a-days, even to pick your courses. There you had to take all the courses especially with math . . . geometry and all that stuff.

Upon further inquiry into what her educational endeavour was preparing her for, she said:

I don't know, that was just the school subjects that all the schools had.

It was difficult for the Onyota'a:ka students to identify with knowledge that was from another culture and society, a
knowledge that was mandated to erase any and all Aboriginal knowledge. Dianne Longboat (1984:1) states:

Education has worked with the long-term objective of weakening Indian nations through causing the children to lose sight of their identities, history and spiritual knowledge.

One day a community member spoke up to have a change made in the curriculum that was delivered to the Onyota’a:ka students. Participant F said:

I pushed for Native Studies to be put in the curriculum. [I tried] for about seven or eight years. They told me we couldn’t. But I told DIA it was our school.

In reflection she said:

It makes me feel proud to see Native Studies get in the school. We are Native so we should know something about ourselves. We were always taught the Whiteman way so it was a big change.

The students had many different experiences in their formal educational journey that had an impact on their lives. For the most part the students reported that their experience in the formal educational system was fairly positive if they followed the model learned by Participant I. She says:

As long as I read the book and went by the book I was an A-student.

The interviews of the Onyota’a:ka people in this search for voice indicate to us that they have made great attempts at acquiring the teachings of the non-Native society. Participant L and Participant M both indicated their increasing anticipation as they waited for the results of their applications into the post secondary levels of education. As we hear the voices of the younger generation and of their progress through the formal educational system we understand what Participant I means when
She says:

It's because they have been conditioned school, school, school. It's like a conditioning. It's already all set, generation after generation. As long as you follow it, you're A-1 [in the Western society].

How was this conditioning accomplished in the Onyota'a:ka society? Discipline?

**Discipline**

The early form of school discipline was the strap and the implied use of the strap. Many of the participants spoke about the use of the strap particularly in conjunction with their use of the traditional language within hearing range of the non-Native teachers. In the case of the participant researcher a wooden ruler was brought down on the palm of her hands, to ensure obedience. Verbal insults were also used as a form of control and silencing when the students were told they talked like they had hot potatoes in their mouth when they spoke. The younger participants of this study remember being punished by being put in a highchair or in the classroom dog house if they disobeyed or were disruptive in the classroom.

**Traditional Education**

Although another way has been introduced into the community, the traditional way of teaching and learning is still a significant aspect of Onyota'a:ka living. The elders, the grandparents and the parents continue to teach cultural values and customs, both orally and by example. The infants, toddlers, children, and youth continue to learn by watching, by listening
Learning by Observation

According to the participants in this study many watched and/or listened to their grandparents, parents or other role models as they went about their activities of daily living and the next thing they knew they were doing the same kinds of things. For example, Participant B tells of his farming experience as an adult while he was working for one of the area farmers:

I understand how to take the chaff or dirt away from the grain because my grandfather he did that with a threshing machine. I was just a little guy and I looked at it, how to go about cleaning the grain.

Participant B watched what his grandfather did and when it was time for him to use his acquired learning he used it to do the best job he could when it was necessary.

Participant I also relates her experience of learning by observation. She remembers watching her grandfather work in the garden. She says:

We weren’t allowed in the garden at first, because we didn’t know what some of these things were. It’s after those plants come up that we were allowed in the garden. Why he was doing this stuff? It was never explained to us when we were kids. We always stood at the edge and just watched, and waited. Till the plants came up then we could see what was in there. Then came the hoeing, taking care of things. That garden is just an example of what we had to take care of.

The traditional ways of learning through observation and listening are still with the Onyota’a:ka people. As Participant M demonstrates:

I remember going to the pow wow when I was 6 years old. I watched them for about 10 minutes, and I ran off and played
somewhere else. I went again when I was eleven years old. It was at the Turtle in Niagara Falls. I was sitting there, watching everything. I was listening, watching the drummers. Watching how everybody acted. I said, "Mom I want to dance." She said okay. I got my outfit done. I practised and practised and I danced.

The above quotes are a few of the examples of traditional learning by observing and listening. Each of the participants mentioned their use of this type of learning experience.

Learning Through Experiences and Experimenting

Being physically involved in doing activities is also a way of learning and relating to everything around you. When Participant G was invited to share his thoughts about his learning experience he said:

I think because I grew up on a farm I was able to work with animals: horses, dogs, cats and cows. I used to talk to them. I used to play with them. I made them better animals. I used to tease them sometimes. They use to kick and try to bite sometimes, but they were never able to, at least not too often. I always was sort of lucky. I would keep my distance, just right. Those were some of the things that I found helpful. Even though you can't put a point on it.

In this situation Participant G learned about respect, one of the traditional values. He learned that he could play with and tease the animals but he also had to be aware and respect the animals in their retaliation of his rough housing. This activity taught him that he could only push so far, knowing that he had to become responsible for his own actions.

He also learned in his family interactions, leadership skills necessary to produce trust, co-operation and sharing. He says:

The book writing is only secondary to the better learning experiences with the family. All my brothers
and sisters know me as the leader, [the two older ones] would tell me what had to be done and then went about their own business. They never worried about anything else any more. I got those things done that needed doing. Outside, I had to feed the horses, water them, cut wood, get wood, milk the cows, and all that was left for me to do sometimes. On the inside, I took care of the younger ones for whatever was needed, but mostly I told them what was needed to be done and that I counted on them to get it done, and it was done. I got them to do things while I did some of the work. To me that was part of the learning.

Survival skills are a very important component in traditional learning. Because of the changing ways of living, the Onyota’a:kha had to be able to adapt their lifestyle to the milieu they lived in. This meant that parents worked out in the larger society to provide for the survival of their family. When this happened the older children were cast in parental role models.

Experience is one of the best teachers. Participant G shares an example of his experience of how, after much observation, he had to get out and try to plough on his own.

Sometime during the summer I used to want to learn how to plough. I used to want to learn how to work these things. So I used to hook up the horses, take them down to the fields and plough. I used to see how Dad did it. He never said go and do it. But when I wanted to do it, I did it. So hooking up the horses to the plough, I set and lined up the stakes, and then let the horses go. Those darn horses, Prince and Fan, they were smart, they’d look at the stakes and head straight for them, pass one and head for the next. Come to the end we’d turn around and start back. Those two old horses knew what they were doing. They just needed someone to work with them. We went about 10 rounds and that was it. I could do it. I never ploughed any more.

As we observe from the previous comments the traditional ways of learning by observation and example continue to pervade the Onyota’a:kha way of life and these ways are adapted to be used when they are most beneficial.
Traditional Knowledge and Values

Just as the traditional ways of learning and teaching continue to be a part of the Onyota’a:ka community so too does traditional knowledge and values.

How The Onyota’a:ka Learned

The Onyota’a:ka learned their traditional knowledge and values in many different ways. They learned them through the teachings of the Longhouse, through family interactions, through listening to the elders and also through participating in events such as the powwows, church and other community activities.

Longhouse Practices and Ceremonies

Although the longhouse and the ceremonies are still part of the community some of the people don’t participate in this traditional activity. During the interviews Participant B related his experience with the traditional Longhouse:

I quit that long time ago. Yeah, when I was sixteen years old I quit. Oh yeah I used to dance. I used to dance there.

Even though the ways of the Longhouse were set aside by many of the Onyota’a:ka, when Participant C was asked about her thoughts pertaining to the traditional ways she said:

I go to the Longhouse when it concerns medicine. I believe in the ceremonial medicine, 'cause it does help. It helps me and it helps those that believe in it. You have to really understand exactly how the medicine ceremony helps you. I mean if you don’t believe in it, there’s no sense taking part. And when it comes to medicine they use Indian medicine instead of going to the doctors, that’s part of the tradition.

The Longhouse is a vehicle used to carry out the more formal
aspects of the traditional ways such as the agricultural cyclical ceremonies, the naming ceremonies, the condolence ceremonies, medicine ceremonies and others.

**Family**

The family is the immediate unit in the socialization process of a child and therefore what the family does in the way of traditional knowledge is what the younger generation will do. Since the mother is usually the teaching agent many of the traditions will be passed to children by her example.

Participant C gives an example of how the family is very instrumental in conveying many of the traditional teachings. She said:

I grew up from a little kid with my mother having them [the different ceremonies], so it was always in our family.

Although immediate family plays an important role in the learning process so too does the extended family, especially when the grandparents, aunts and uncles live in close proximity to each other. The Onyota’a:ka have a history of living an agricultural lifestyle therefore planting and harvesting are still a part of the traditional way that many Onyota’a:ka people engage in. Participant I shares an experience where she learned a traditional teaching from her extended family. She stated:

It goes back to my grandfather. This time of the year -- what’s related to this time of the year? -- the planting. So the next part is the harvesting. That’s the part that I use to always look forward to too, the harvest with my grandfather. Getting ready for the winter. What he did was, he was always distributing stuff. That’s what I relate lot of my childhood experiences with. My grandfather saw it as survival. You’ve got to survive for the winter and this is what
you do. I’ve learned from what my grandfather taught. My grandfather was the one that really taught me lot of -- why this and why that.

Participant I continues to carry on the tradition of survival that she learned from her grandfather. She says she puts in her garden every year. This activity is always of interest to her neighbours because they know that she has learned the value of sharing, and they know that at the time of harvest she will begin distributing the produce that has come from Mother Earth. She has learned the responsibility that her grandfather wanted her to know so that she and her family will survive.

The Importance of Elders

In spite of our formal educational teaching of individualism, the Onyota’a:ka people continue to realize that we do not operate in a vacuum but need to acknowledge and engage our elders in the perpetuation of our unique culture. As Participant J points out:

We’ve got all these older ones that just are really beautiful people that have a lot of knowledge. They’re still here, and we’ve got to tap into that rich knowledge.

The younger people are usually not as aware of the need to continue learning about the things that grow and sustain life. Harmony with nature is one of the values Native society and Participant A, one of the community elders, says:

I like trees. I’ve got trees, they’re growing. In the spring they come alive. In the spring I come alive with the trees too. I’m happy in the spring looking at them. In the fall I see their leaves going down. Oh the leaves are gone. I wonder if I’ll see the leaves next year. Next year they come back out. They’re so bright. Now I’ve planted all kinds of new trees here. Any money I got, I buy a little tree, put it there.
The kids can see it years to come. Maybe I won’t see them grow but my kids will. That’s what I always say.

It is this joy of living that these older people have to share with the younger people.

**Pow wow Circuit**

Participant M tells us that the pow wow is good for cleaning the garbage out of your mind and out of your spirit too. She says that this type of activity is not something that you should take lightly. She tells us:

The values and stuff like that, I learned through the Pow Wow circuit. Because I started dancing at about age 12, and it has taught me a lot. I’ve learned a lot more in that circle than I have at school. Like when it comes to myself. At school it’s just books and paper. At the pow wow you’re into your culture and everything like that, everything. That’s where I go to focus my mind. I don’t know, it just seems like, it teaches me not to set any boundaries or limits, because you can always do better than what you think you can. You just want to do the thing. If you don’t want to do it, then it doesn’t get done. Or it doesn’t get done right. But if you want to do it, and it’s something that you like to do then its in the value, you’ve got it. That’s the way I see it. It’s taught me to see things, differently, not so much as just what’s in front of me, but beyond what’s in front of me. But to look into things from a different perspective. Because some people, you know how people are just so narrow minded sometimes. I don’t see things that way any more. I probably use to but I don’t any more. Because you consider all different aspects of life. It’s taught me how to respect and to be respectable and how to honour and to be honourable. Because the elders play a big role there too. And you know if you don’t do something right, they’ll tell you.

Although the pow wow is not traditional to the Onyota’a:ka community, some of the people can still relate to it as a learning institution.

Although the church has had a major influence on the lives of many of the Onyota’a:ka people there was no specific mention
of this influence during this particular study. The major focus was on the experience of the school system.

**Onyota’a:ka Teachings**

*Survival*

One of the most important aspects of Onyota’a:ka life is survival. One feature of survival is making sure that the family is fed, clothed and housed. This aspect of survival is the utmost in the mind of the caretakers; therefore the parents and the grandparents stress the need to teach what responsibilities need to be passed on to the younger generation. Participant I says of her teachings about traditional survival knowledge:

Yes, like [my father said] you’re responsibilities were at home, not in the school, not in the building. It was at home. You know, his whole thing about life seemed to be survival. Now I can understand that, where I couldn’t back then.

There was a tension between what the parents wanted the children to know about the immediate survival of family life and about the survival of the traditional collectivity as opposed to how the school wanted to condition them into individualism where only the best survive.

*Spirituality/Healing*

The relationship to Mother Earth is one of the manifestations of spirituality. It doesn’t matter what our faith system is, it is the relationship to every thing around us that is important to our spiritual well-being and the way we reveal that relationship. So although we have many different faith systems in the Onyota’a:ka community there are still ways to augment those systems with the Onyota’a:ka traditional way of the
life. One of the ways to do that is to work with the earth to produce sustenance.

Traditional ways are as important to the Onyota’a:ka people now as they were back in our historical times. In the Onyota’a:ka community there is a segment of the society that has adapted to the Euro-western ways but have not given up their traditional agricultural practices. Participant J states:

Most of the Christians in this community tend gardens because that’s the way they were brought up. That’s the Oneida in them, the Onyota’a:ka. That’s something that nobody is going to take that away from them.

And their humbleness, the way they are, the caring that they have. It’s not because they are Christians, it’s because of their upbringing again.

So when you get below that surface stuff, into that person as a human being, like they say now. You’re always going to find that Oneida in them. That’s the healing that we need to go through.

It’s the healing that all of our people need to experience.

Although much of the traditional knowledge pertaining to the different herbal medicines has been conditioned out of the people Participant J tells us that the older people say "when you step outside of your door, that’s where the medicine starts". He goes on to inform us that although we don’t know about the medicines, they are still as common as they were a couple hundred years ago or longer. He says that "we need to be responsible to learn those things because those days are coming when the only thing that’s going to heal our people and keep them healthy and be able to survive [are] those medicines that exist out there".

**Values**

The family is the whole world to young children. The members of the family teach children what is important in life, most times without realizing the impact they are having. Values
that are meaningful are transmitted to the next generation. In this section the values of not setting limits, humility, sharing, responsibility, and independence will be highlighted.

**Not Limiting Yourself**

Participant K learned from his family the value of not limiting yourself. In the traditional way he listened and observed what was happening in his family. He shares the teaching of his role models:

Nothing was impossible for both my grandfather and my dad. So I was told as a kid whatever it is that you want to do, it's there if you work for it. Only you can limit yourself, from both my dad and my grandfather.

Participant K listened well to the advice of his grandfather and his father. He now passes that same advice on to the high school students that he works with in his counselling position in the formal educational setting. He says:

Like some kids come in, they want to skip school, or their girl friend or boy friend wants to be with them. They really don't want to go to school today or the next few days. They have their own mind, whatever they're thoughts are, nobody can change it.

What they have to realize is that whatever decisions they make it's going to affect them for the rest of their lives. But they have to remember that number one person.

And to me, all my students in there right now are number one. If you were a student here and you came into my office, you're that number one person. Maybe you should look after that number one person. Learn. Get your education. Use that to your advantage. It's there right now. It's available to you.

There are all different ways, where you can benefit from it. Everything is right there. Just take it. Even when you go out of high school, there's post secondary... There's help there too, by using it to your advantage. Use it for that number one person. You're the one that's here, you're important to me.

I want to see you grow up and be the next prime minister. The first Native Prime Minister, maybe you wouldn't be the one, but I would like to see a Native Prime Minister. There is no reason why you can't; or a Senator in Parliament, or some MP, MPP; like Elijah Harper and all them
guys. I say to them, "There is no reason why you can’t do that."

So Participant K teaches us of the value of not setting limits on ourselves. He reminds us of what his father and grandfather thought was important to pass on to the future generations. By not limiting yourself you are able to set goals that you would like to attain.

•Value of Humility

In the traditional teaching, humility is an intrinsic quality that comes from being cognizant of the relationship between humankind and the cosmos. The elders tell us that everything around us would continue to function even if we were not here. The Onyota’a:ka realize their dependence on Mother Earth for their survival and, in their humility, they practice ways that ensure their relationship to the earth. Participant J states "[People] in this community tend gardens because that’s the way they were brought up. That’s the Oneida in them, the Onyota’a:ka. That’s something that nobody is going to take that away from them. And their humbleness, the way they are, [reveals] the caring that they have."

•Value of Sharing

Sharing was found to be a prevailing quality in the community of Onyota’a:ka. When I approached the participants for this study, all of them were willing to share their time and experience so that I could complete the interviews for this study. Throughout the interviews many of the participants mentioned the concept of sharing as they talked about their
experiences. This experience allowed Participant C to reflect on the sharing, caring and respect of her extended family. In the first interview she was lamenting the fact that Onyota’a:ka families are not as close knit as they once were, but on further reflection, she was able to relive and feel good about an experience where her extended family all pulled together for her during her time of a significant family crisis.

One participant mentioned the sharing of knowledge that elders give at the various pow wows that she attended. Another mentioned the sharing that goes on in the family as they go about their daily lives. Another talked about sharing her harvest with the neighbours when the harvesting of her garden is finished.

-Value of Responsibility

Taking responsibility for the survival of the traditional knowledge is a valued quality in the Native society. Participant J says "we need to be responsible to learn [about the medicines] because those days are coming when the only thing that’s going to heal our people and keep them healthy and be able to survive are those medicines that exist out there". Participant A was able to recall the happy memories of her childhood and how she was able to help carry some of the burden of responsibility with her parents even when it meant she would have to leave her family and go to a distant residential school so the younger children could survive at home. At the end of the interview her closing was "The way I am is I’m happy." As an elder, Participant A takes on the responsibility of providing the beauty of the trees for the future generations by planting trees whenever she can afford a
few dollars to buy another tree. These are but a few examples of
the responsibility that concerns the Onyota'a:ka.

• Value of Independence

Independence is another characteristic that the Onyota'a:ka
strive for. The traditional history of the Onyota'a:ka has been
one of independence. When they first came from New York State in
1840, they bought their own land. They built their own houses.
They cleared the land for their gardens so they would have
produce for sustenance. They governed themselves with their
traditional form of sovereignty. They did things themselves so
things would get done. Participant H gives us an example of how
she had to learn independence. She tells about her history of
having to become independent in order to survive and help her
siblings to survive.

When I first started babysitting, I was only
seven. Now-a-days common sense tells you, you don't
make a kid that young look after babies. And these
babies were only three months old. That’s the way it
was. My mother would have a baby, stay home for the
first three months [then she would go back to work],
then we’d take over.

We’d wake up in the morning, they’d be gone. So
we had to look after the kids. Lot of times it would
be a cold pot of cereal. We’d have to look after that.
Feed everybody, make fire, get ready for school, and
then whose ever turn it was to stay home. They’d take
their turn. See, no matter what, there was always
three little ones at home that didn’t go to school yet.
So we had to look after them.

The rules were, we had to have the house cleaned
when they got home; the laundry had to be done; and
supper had to be on. If something was not done, we
always got a licking everyday. So that’s how it was.

The water supply, every summer we would run out of
water. So we were going down the road to get water.
That’s where we had to go to get our water. To do our
laundry, for everything.

Sometimes he [father] wouldn’t have wood at the
house, so we would have to go back into the woods and
cut trees down, haul them back to the house, chop them up, just to have fire.
So I guess that’s where I learned how to be independent, like I may be too independent for some people. They don’t like the way I am. ‘Cause if you wouldn’t help me do it, then I’ll do it myself, ‘cause that’s the way it’s going to get done. And I’m still like that. I’m a very independent person. That’s because I had to, we had to do it, way back then. We had to do it as kids.

These are some of the many values that are passed on to the younger generation through the socialization process of the family, the community and the larger society.

Identity

Identity was another theme found to be running through the voices of the participants as they shared their learning experiences. This section pertaining to identity will be divided into four main areas. The first area will be ‘Who fostered Native Identity’. There will be two subsections under this heading. One will be ‘Family’ and the other will be ‘Employer’. The second section will deal with ‘Who rejected Native Identity’. Under this heading will be the subsection ‘School’. The third section will address the issues of ‘Shyness and Self-esteem’. This section will deal with factors such as contact with non-Native people, not speaking English and family patterns. The last section will deal with ‘How to improve attitudes and Self-esteem’.
The Fostering of Native Identity

• Family

Parents are an influential aspect of a person’s identity. Participant A shares with us positive identity development with her family:

I was really happy, and happy with my parents. They weren’t cross with me. They corrected me in just the way I should live. And that’s the way I’m living today. I try to, you know, not depend too much on anybody else. That’s the way I grew up, and that’s the way I’m living today.

I was very happy all the time I was home. I loved my mom and dad. They were very kind. Very, very kind. Today I still think about that. Even I’m sick, I’m happy. I don’t complain about anything. Never. Just living here. I’m really happy. I think that’s the way everybody should live. That’s what I think. If you’re sick and start complaining about everything, that’s not going to make you better, it’s going to make you feel worse. That’s what I say.

Participant L also shares with us his experience of home encouragement to develop a positive identity in his school work. He said:

Oh I had lots of help from home. Encouragement. It was particularly my mother, because she went back to school. She got through University and everything at King’s College. And that really motivated me to get my advanced credits. ...My Grandma and Auntie help a lot too. Because they always encourage me to do real good in class. They always congratulate me when my mark is good.

Participant M has also had positive encouragement from her family. She says:

It’s encouragement from the parents. That’s what you have to build on. That counts a lot.
Participant B also experienced many different things as he followed the path of his life journey. The positive experience he identified with was his life as a farmer. His grandfather and his father were both farmers, and he as a young child experienced the way they lived and passed on their knowledge to him. As Participant B grew up and left the care of his parental homestead, he went to work for an area farmer. He says of his farming experience:

He let me go farming on my own, on his property. He buys seed for me to grow it and harvest it. I work it like as if I was owner of the place. I have a good crop all the time because I had stuff to work with. I had manure put on, and fertilizer with it. And I put in corn. I worked the farm just as if it were mine. Cultivated it, worked it and all things like that. I feel good about it because I put in real straight rows. And lot of people say my corn field is clean, and the rows are real, just like if you shoot a gun. Hit the target. Lot of people thank me. I have good eyes to put in straight. All I used was a team of horses and two row planter. I handled the horses good and straight.

The Onyota’a:ka ne ha was not taken away from these participants. They still have the upbringing of the home situation and they can still identify with the traditional values that were instilled by the love and nurturing of their parents.

Native Identity Rejected by the School

Participant C was six years old when she first came in contact with the formal school system where much of a child’s identity is formed. This is what she says of her experience:

They were trying to get us to forget our Native culture, they weren’t trying to teach us. . .

Rather than adopt a negative identity Participant C says:
I just went along with both of them I didn’t reject the white culture and I didn’t reject my own either.

Basically the first eleven students of this study experienced the rejection of Native identity by the schools.

**Shyness and Self-esteem**

What causes shyness? Is it low self-confidence? Then what causes low self-confidence? Is it low self-esteem? Why would the Onyota’a:ka have low self-esteem? Is it because of a negative self-concept? Why would Onyota’a:ka have a negative self-concept? There are many factors that affect the way people see themselves which result in different reactions and behaviours in different situations.

Participant C was aware that she did not have a high degree of self-confidence due to the bi-cultural life she had to live. Being in an unfamiliar language situation she says:

I think that being shy was the problem too. Not just me, but anybody that speaks their own language are shy to talk English. Because we weren’t sure whether we were talking the right way.

Participant M also comments on being shy. He says of his first experience in the county school system:

Well, it was hard because everybody was like they knew more stuff. Like they could multiply, like up to their 9 times table. They could go right up to 12, and I barely knew up to 9. I was struggling with the cards. It seemed like everybody [non-Native] was real smart too. They weren’t shy. That was one of my problems, I was shy. I didn’t have that much confidence.

As he continued on into the high school system he said, "I just kept trying and trying. Finally I realized I wasn’t dumb or anything." As he reflected back on his experience he said:
It seemed funny because in most of my classes I was at the bottom of my class. I was barely getting by in public school, all the way up. Now I take advanced. I pass and everything. And all the people that were smarter than me, they’re not doing very good in general level. I don’t know that’s just lack of confidence I guess.

Participant L also reflected on her personal development as she was coming through the school system. She said of her self-esteem:

It was really low there for a while. I thought I wasn’t smart because all through public school that’s what I thought. Because I was in a different environment, it was all new to me.

But it wasn’t until I started getting into the pow wow circuit that my esteem started boosting up. I said, Hey there’s nothing wrong with me. If they can get marks like that, then I can get marks like that. There’s no reason why I can’t.

I think the difference was because they felt more confident. You know in the place that they were. Well you know, that was their home. My home was down here [Onyota’a:ka]. My home was always down here. Even after living 5 years in London, that was my house, but this was my home.

I think that if I was down here, going to school then I know I could have got those grades up. But up there everything seemed so different.

It’s like I think I can get along anywhere. I think I can fit in anywhere. Because I lost that shyness that kept me away from everybody.

Self-confidence comes from knowing who you are and knowing your place on the circle of life. Participant N says of her experience going to a non-Native school at a very early age:

I didn’t fit in. Like, I don’t know, I just didn’t fit in. I would have probably felt better going here [Onyota’a:ka] than at Westminster, because I would have fit in more.

She goes on to say about her secondary school experience:

It’s been better than public school. Well not better but it seems better to me because there’s different people. Not just non Natives, like whites. There’s different cultures.
Family Patterns

As stated earlier the family plays a major role in the early development of identity. What happens when there is a break down in the family situation? What happens if there is a break down in the transmission of traditional cultural knowledge?

Participant J says that the Onyota’a:ka have lost their connection with Mother Earth and therefore don’t understand the teachings that come from the spirit. He says:

A child taken away from the mother becomes lost. It loses its purpose. It hurts and is angry, frustrated.

We all know the symptoms that children go through that end up in children’s aid or whatever. Lot of times they are the ones that abuse themselves with drugs and alcohol and all that kind of stuff when they get older. They have no purpose. They have no spirit.

Participant H was a product of this type of environment. Her mother was orphaned at a very young age. Her father was also orphaned to a certain extent because his mother was sick with tuberculosis and in the hospital constantly. So both of Participant H’s parents were placed in the Mount Elgin residential school at an early age. The result of this type of education was the failure to develop their nurturing parenting skills. Participant H says:

One of the things with me is the way my dad was. I don’t know why he was the way he was. But we were always told how stupid we were.

H’s father probably experienced a lot of this kind of vocal abuse in his early childhood and while at residential school and so he believed this was a normal thing to call children and so ended up practising this on his own family. Unfortunately it was very abusive to his own children as it caused them untold heartache
and damage to their self image and esteem. Participant H also said:

I really bought that. I really believed it. So I never did very well in school. I couldn’t do it. I was stupid. I couldn’t learn anyway.

My dad, I think he thought the way he should raise us was like little soldiers. My parents never really had parenting skills. All they really understood was the abuse part mostly. You don’t do right. You don’t.... and that’s what you get.

It was like they never knew how to show love. So I grew up that way.

Participant H said that it took a long time for her to get her self-esteem to a level where she could say, "Yeah I deserve better than this".

Participant L gives her view of the situation when family becomes dysfunctional:

Well I think it has to start when the kids are young, when they are at home. They have to grow up feeling secure, that their parents are there for encouragement, and for whatever they need. Because they can’t perform to their fullest ability when they have no food at home, or they are worried over things at home. They can’t concentrate at school. And that affects their marks, and eventually if the kid keeps getting back report cards with Ds on it. They’re going to say "Geez I’m really dumb. What’s wrong with me? I’m really dumb. I’m not for this school bit." So they go off and quit school. And end up on welfare and that’s just a big cycle. The parents have to be behind their kids, pushing them. And I think that’s a big problem in our community. Otherwise they are just going to fall back to nothing. And I think that’s a big problem in our community, because there’s a lot of parents. They may care, but they don’t carry out on their feelings. They don’t do anything about it. They may not know how to do anything about it, because they don’t get involved. I think that’s a big thing. It has to come from your values, and your ideals are shaped from your family and from your home. That’s where they are shaped. Mine were shaped at home, largely.
How to improve Attitudes and Self-esteem

Participant H has been through the system and knows what it is like to have low self-esteem. Her goal is to encourage others who may be experiencing similar feelings. She says:

I think in order to help a person, the best thing you can do is to build up that self esteem.

And then start talking, teaching them, "Yes you can do it". You can do it.

Because soon as you tell yourself "I can’t do that", then you can’t do that.

But when you tell yourself, "Yeah. That looks easy. I can do that. Sure I can!" then things start going different and you find out. Yes! You can do it!

How More Mature People Can Help

So Participant H, a veteran of the system, offers advice from her experience as a way to help students raise their self-esteem and attitudes. Participant J also offers his support in this area. He says:

Of course as you get older and as you experience life then that’s knowledge. That’s understanding. That’s patience. That’s caring. That’s totally knowing your place and what it’s suppose to be. To give backbone. To support the younger ones.

Because when you’re young you think you know every thing. When you are young you are healthy. You’re strong. You don’t worry about been sick and stuff like that.

And when you get to that time as you get older then you start to care more and start to understand more and you start to understand more of what life is. Then you have a lot more patience.

And we have to be able to give that to the younger ones. Because as they go through life they got to remember those times. They are going to remember what you taught them. And may be it’s not just us but other people too.

The best experience one could go through is to know they’re loved, is to know they’re cared for. Our people today sometimes, the only thing they know is to
be abused, is to be hurt. If we can turn it around, then we can get it back to that point where it's going to have a good meaning for them.

As in the experience of Coyote the Onyota’a:ka continue to search for balance in their journeys. Participant I verbalized many experiences as she was reliving her past. The positive experience she related to was the teachings she received from her grandfather as he worked diligently in his garden honing his survival skills to get them through another long, cold winter of blustery weather. She also went on to relate many more teachings that she had weathered and witnessed. She talked of how out of balance the community has become through the many abuses that take place. When people experience alcohol abuse, drug abuse, wife abuse, child abuse, sexual abuse, mental abuse, jealousy, greed, violence and eating disorders these result in disharmony with self and relationships; they are no longer in balance and this has a devastating effect on the ability of children to learn and relate in a positive manner.

Summary

In summary the Onyota’a:ka have shared a wide range of learning experiences that have influenced their development as Onyota’a:ka people. They tell us their language was overtly suppressed by the school system, but due to the intervention strategies of the Onyota’a:ka people their language is now being valued and relearned. Their traditional culture was covertly suppressed by the school system, but it to is now recognized and is being practised more openly in the schools they attend. This leads to a more positive attitude toward the language and culture of the Onyota’a:ka people; however, the past practices have had a
negative effect on the identity of many of the students which caused various dysfunctions in their family and community relationships. In the above vignettes it is shown that Onyota’a:ka people are developing coping strategies to deal with the language and culture invasion that has overshadowed them. As did Coyote, the Onyota’a:ka people continue to seek balance with the two different cultural systems that they experience in their educational process.
Chapter Eight
Discussion and Conclusion

Silencing of the Voice

The findings of this study reflect the work of previous research pertaining to the education of the Native people. That is, the system has failed in its attempt to get rid of the "Indian Problem". It has also failed to meet the needs of the Native people.

The initial task of this research journey was to examine my own learning experience as a participant in the formal educational school system at Onyota’a:ka. In retrospect I realized how silenced and muted my voice had become. I was literally unable to talk to people. How did this happen? This may have resulted from an accumulation of contributing factors, such as, when you see other children getting the strap in school for speaking their own Native language, and when you get scolded by the teacher for sounding like you have a hot potato in your mouth when you talk, it is easier to remain quiet than to suffer the punishment for speaking. I learned to keep quiet.

In grade two a ruler was brought down on my hand to silence me because I was talking and interacting with the other students around me. With the fear of physical and verbal punishment I learned to shut down part of myself so I could survive in the school environment that I was exposed to.

In grade nine I came in contact with another silencing action when the teacher refused to help me with my math work, yet she was available to help other students who were not from the Native community. Reflecting on my personal learning experience
has clarified to me that there were certain aspects in which the traditional Euro-western schooling blocked my development and led to certain kinds of suppression that have taken quite a while to overcome.

When I asked the participants to relate their learning experiences, I didn't know what kind of information they would be willing to share, but as I reviewed their stories, I found there were a number of occurrences where their voices had also been silenced as a result of their schooling. From the literature review, the interviews, and personal observations this silence was the result of many factors, such as government policies and Indian agents; residential schools and missionaries; community reserve schools and non-Native teachers.

The educational journey that I embarked upon to complete a doctoral degree has been an excellent opportunity for me to explore the schooling system of the Native people of Canada. This has allowed me to examine my own path through the system. I can see where some of my experiences in the school system have caused me to be silent but I can also see where some of the experiences in the school system have been positive and allowed me to regain my voice. For example when I worked with the Native students in alternative schools in custody facilities I was able to exercise my voice in the Native way to give them the opportunity to experience success in their studies. Another positive experience was meeting Dr. Hunt, a visionary and creative professor who encouraged me to examine my learning experience so that I would have a better understanding and awareness of the education experienced by the Native people.
With this new awareness of the Euro-western educational process I have come to realize the importance of having a positive self-identity in my own traditions to be able to exercise my voice in the concerns of my people.

This has been a complex journey because I have had to use two different ways to get the information across. In the Native traditional way of education, storytelling is one of the main teaching methods. The learner can take as much of the story that is needed. In the non-Native way every thing has to be explicit and the learner is led to the answer. Journeying these two paths have both inhibited and inspired my need to develop an understanding of the balance needed in an educational system.

As I was reviewing the art work produced by my daughter I came across a painting (Art 1) that gave me inspiration to continue to develop my voice in relation to the Native people. The little colour of bloom in the center of this mass of black and white is like the Aboriginal voices that are beginning to reclaim the traditional ways for our people in the educational setting.

Discussion of the findings below will be addressed under the headings of language, culture, formal education, traditional education, traditional knowledge and values, and identity. Each section will be considered in reference to silencing.
Art I. Reclaiming our Traditions

By Rosalind Gail Antone
The findings pertaining to the language indicate that the older people went along with how and what they were taught in the formal educational system. They had their language and traditional culture, so they tried to 'fit' into what was expected of them in the school system. They suppressed their language and they became silent when it was necessary to avoid punishment. These people also did not teach their children to communicate in the Onyota’a:ka language. In later generations those who knew the Onyota’a:ka language also did not transmit the language to their children, but it was members of this generation who became the visionaries for their people. They began to question the federal school curriculum and pressed for Onyota’a:ka language inclusion.

The youngest generation of this study had the opportunity to experience language inclusion programs. As is found in the literature, these students also indicate that language inclusion was not enough to help them learn and retain the Onyota’a:ka language. As Cajete (1994:52) states, "Among the Navajo... language is sacred because it is an expression of the Holy Wind that exists as the breath of life in each person."

Language inclusion programs do not allow this kind of spiritual expression to be utilized. He says,

...language and its oral transmission are the foundations of the sacred traditions that bind them, through breath, to each other, other living things, their Holy Ones, and the world in all its immensity and beauty. Language is a form of Wind that informs, expresses, and orients the "wind standing within".

...The use of language and symbolic words carry a responsibility because they cause things to happen. They evoke; they instruct. ...Their use must be learned
and applied with great respect for they are connected to the inner forms in the mountains at the cardinal directions. These inner forms of the mountains each have words, songs, and a language by virtue of their unique Wind; they also have the plants and animals associated with their form. This is why they influence humans who live in their shadows.(1994:53)

This supports the findings of a study conducted by Leavitt (1991:268) where he states that:

One native-language teacher commented upon the necessity of trying "to sort out differences in value systems and religious beliefs that have been tying us to different worlds without completely letting us into either one."

In Onyota'a:ka much more work needs to be done to revive the language because to date the system used to convey language inclusion through the school curriculum has not assisted greatly in language retention. The traditional teaching and learning process also needs to be used. Stairs (1991:281) maintains that the linguistic and curricular content of Native education can be appropriately pursued only when put into traditional cultural values concerning ways of using language, of interacting, and of knowing. As well as using the 'how' of Indigenous education, it is also necessary to use the 'why' that is, the cultural values, goals, future pictures, identity and meaning. The remarks of Participant J also support the findings of previous work and indicate the need for development of more indigenous knowledge and ways of teaching. He states:

For our [TSINIWUKWALIHO:TA] curriculum we went back to our teachings: we went back to the cycle of the year; and we went back to using the opening address. We had one of the people from the community come here and draw this picture. [Indicated the large mural size picture on the south wall depicting all aspects of the Thanksgiving Address.] That is what we do. When we do our ceremonies, when we have meetings that’s what we do that’s what we acknowledge, the things of creation.
And that was the basis of our language and our teachings.

To reclaim the Onyota’a:ka voice it will be necessary to reincorporate language, culture, teaching and learning processes as well as the values and goals of the people. Leavitt (1991:274) proposes:

Teachers of native students will want to inquire about the best situations for conversation, the most natural methods of description and classification, and the real functions of language in their students' lives. They will want to let students integrate their experiences, spiritual beliefs, and social values with what they read and hear. Using this approach to language, teachers will be able to help native students find their way into the continuum of interconnections between the generations, between people and the world about them, between the knowledge of individuals and that of the community as a whole.

CULTURE

The findings for the culture section is a reflection of the language situation. Most of the people went along with what they were taught by the Euro-western school system. This is another form of silencing the voice of the people. Hampton (1995:35) states that:

Western education is in content and structure hostile to Native people. It must be straight forwardly realized that education, as currently practised, is cultural genocide. It seeks to brainwash the Native child, substituting non-Native for Native knowledge, values, and identity.

This was the kind of education experienced by the Onyota’a:ka people until one person with a different vision emerged from within the community and asked for Native studies.

In Cajete’s model of "tracking the spirit of vision" (1994:187f) one of his concentric rings is called The Asking. He
This represents the first stage in the search for meaning and establishment of relationships around one's vision. The Asking is the first stage of focusing the dreams, intuitions, and desires that motivate the questing for vision generated from the Centering Place. The Asking is the place of questions, and this the place that, I believe, American Indians are in tracking a collective vision of Indian education.

Without vision there would be no asking. Cajete (1994:147) postulates that:

Indian young people need to be given opportunities to learn again how to live through vision and reconnect their contemporary lives with that of their Tribal heritage. By living through vision, young people learn how to reconnect with and honor their own nature; they learn how to live a life in touch with their individual creative sources. They learn to live life purposefully and understand life and education as a process toward becoming complete.

When the visioning process is no longer used by the people, their communities become static and distorted. Miriam-Rose as quoted by Arleen Stairs (1994:63) says:

[R]emember that culture is something that does not stop still; it develops through challenges and interaction of people and events or it becomes distorted and dies.

If the visionary process is not challenged and developed the future picture becomes one-sided, making it difficult to know which road to follow. Linda Marks (1989:36) states:

to develop a visionary process means to develop the ability to see the way things are; to see how things can be; to know what needs to be done from where we are to where we are going; to know what part we are to play in partnership with others; to feel the inspiration and call to act; and to be able to know and take appropriate action to live a life with purpose.

Cajete's (1994:148) assertion is that:

The essential dilemma of many Indian young people is how to live purposefully. Indian youth need to see the relationships among Indian cultural values, finding a purpose for their lives, understanding the kind of work
they need to act on purpose, and developing of a vision that guides them toward fulfilment of themselves as complete human beings.

The findings in the literature support what Participant J, of this study, has to say about the necessity of vision. His contention is:

You have to give life to children. You have to give to the future. You have to give them a vision. That’s what we’re all about is to give them that vision. Not to be afraid to do what you need to do.

In the changing face of Aboriginal education it is shown that there is more understanding of the need to incorporate the cultural values and goals of the communities. Leavitt (1991:277) states:

Only as they develop an understanding of students’ needs and knowledge of students’ communities will teachers be able to find this ideal cultural balance in their work.

In summary, although there has been much hostility in the Euro-western models of education, both Native and non-Native educators are beginning to seek ways of distributing information that is more conducive to the cultural ways of Native traditional educational practices. The voice of culture in Native societies is once again gaining strength through the development of new understandings and the incorporation of community cultural values and goals.

FORMAL EDUCATION

Formal education of the Onyota’a:ka people was a silencing vehicle of the dominant society. The Onyota’a:ka were exposed to education under the auspices of the Indian Act where the federal government assumed complete control of Aboriginal children and
their schooling. Battiste (1995:viii) describes the objectives and outcome of formal education for the Aboriginal peoples:

For a century or more, the DIAND [Department of Indian Affairs and Northern Development] attempted to destroy the diversity of Aboriginal world-views, cultures, and languages. It defined education as transforming the mind of Aboriginal youth rather than educating it. Through ill-conceived government policies and plans, Aboriginal youths were subjected to a combination of powerful but profoundly distracting forces of cognitive imperialism and colonization. Various boarding schools, industrial schools, day schools, and Eurocentric educational practices ignored or rejected the world-views, languages, and values of Aboriginal parents in the education of their children. The outcome was the gradual loss of these world-views, languages, and cultures and the creation of widespread social and psychological upheaval in Aboriginal communities.

The consequence of the formal education and mind transformation had a crushing effect on Native communities.

Eber Hampton (1995) used the medicine wheel typology as an organizing principle for the redefinition of Indian education. He postulates that the six directions (above or the spiritual realm, east, south, west, north, and the earth) are a way of thinking about existing in the universe. He says that "it directs us to think of Indian education as dynamic" with "movement" and "historical development." He tells us that:

The west is the direction of autumn, the end of summer, and the precursor of winter. On the great plains, thunderstorms roll in from the west. In Lakota cosmology, the good red road of life runs north and south and the road of death runs east and west. (p.31)

In his analogy, he equates the west direction to autumn which is likened to death. He says:

The coming of Western civilization (meaning western Europe), with its Western forms of education, to this continent was the autumn of traditional Indian education. In the fall, the wild grass dies. The Europeans took our land, our lives, and our children
like the winter snow takes the grass. The loss is painful but the seed lives in spite of the snow. In the fall of the year, the grass dies and drops its seed to lie hidden under the snow. Perhaps the snow thinks the seed has vanished but it lives on hidden, or blowing in the wind, or clinging to the plant's leg of progress. (p. 31)

Once again in relation to this study, the direction of west on the medicine wheel analogy can be used to indicate the death of education that was originally brought to the Onyota’a:ka people by the Euro-western educators. The seeds that laid hidden beneath the winter snow of the Euro-western educational system experienced a spring of regrowth with roots deeper into the earth allowing for another journey through the summer sun.

Following the analogy of the medicine wheel and the seed, the education of the Onyota’a:ka people has been journeying through the summer cycle of growth. Just as plants are cross pollinated to produce stronger seeds the Onyota’a:ka people experienced various teaching situations to help them weather the harshness of winter. Hampton (1995:33) states:

The north demands that we understand survival; it teaches endurance and wisdom. Its lessons can be hard and it is not enough to be good, or smart. The north demands knowledge.

With the advancement of alternative models of education advocated by Aboriginal theorists the voice for Aboriginal education is increasing.
TRADITIONAL EDUCATION

The literature pertaining to traditional education indicates the importance of the learning and teaching that takes place in Aboriginal communities. When this does not occur the voice of the people is silenced. The participants of this study reveal that traditional education continues to be an important way of learning. Cajete (1994:176) states:

By watching, listening, experiencing, and participating everyone learned what it was to be one of the People, and how to survive in community with others. Learning how to care for one's self and others, learning relationship between people and other things, learning the customs, traditions, and values of a community: all of these understandings and more were the daily course of Indigenous education.

There is much learning that takes place outside of the classroom that in the past was not considered to be of value. In the Onyota'a:ka community the parents now realize the need to pass on the traditions that are important to them. Art II another painting by my daughter Rosalind depicts the suppressed traditions that are being revived and passed on to the next generation. Recent developments concerning Indigenous education indicate that more and more educators are validating the traditional education that children learn from the home environment.
Art II. Passing on the Traditions

By Rosalind Gail Antone
As Cajete (1994:33) explored the tribal foundations of Indian education he asserts that:

we are tracking the earliest sources of human teaching and learning. These foundations teach us that learning is a subjective experience tied to a place environmentally, socially, and spiritually. Tribal teaching and learning were intertwined with the daily lives of both teacher and learner. Tribal education was a natural outcome of living in close communion with each other and the natural environment.

Listening to the life histories of Aboriginal speakers help educators become more aware of culturally appropriate education. Leavitt (1994:183) states:

Life history, whether spoken or written, is helpful because it contains not only reflections on education but also indications of the cultural context in which learning and teaching take place.

With the advent of culturally appropriate ways of learning and teaching the Aboriginal voice will be illuminated.

TRADITIONAL KNOWLEDGE AND VALUES

As indicated by this study and the literature review the traditional knowledge and values of the Native people have not been valued by the mainstream approaches to education consequently their voice has been silenced. Cajete (1994:188) states:

Alienation from mainstream approaches to education have been one of the consistent criticisms levelled against modern education by Indian students. Beyond compensatory programs, remediation, and programs that attempt to bridge the social orientations of students with those of the school, they have been given few choices of school curricula that truly address their alienation. Most attempts at addressing these issues have revolved around refitting the problematic Indian student to the system that caused their alienation. Too often, the Indian student is viewed as the problem, rather than the unquestioned approaches, attitudes, and curricula of the educational system. The knowledge, values, skills, and interests that Indian students possess are largely
ignored in favor of strategies aimed at enticing them to conform to mainstream education.

Although the Onyotara’a:ka students did try to fit into the mainstream process of education they continued to maintain their traditional knowledge, values, skills and interests. It is time for the Onyotara’a:ka people to validate the traditional knowledge, values, and skills they have in order for Onyotara’a:ka to survive as a unique Aboriginal nation. In the document *Tradition and Education* it states:

Children are the most precious resource of the First Nations. They are the link to the past generations, the enjoyment of present generations, and the hope for the future. First Nations intend to prepare their children to carry on their cultures and governments. (Charleston, 1988:1)

As the literature and interviews reveal, Onyotara’a:ka along with other Aboriginal people continue to strive for cultural wholeness as they seek to prepare their children to carry on their nations with traditional knowledge and values.

Archibald (1995:289) states:

First Nations people traditionally adopted a holistic approach to education. Principles of spiritual, physical, and emotional growth, as well as economic and physical survival skills, were developed in each individual to ensure eventual family and village survival. Certain learning specialities in these areas were emphasized, including independence, self-reliance, observation, discovery, empirical practicality, and respect for nature.

In the work of Hampton (1995) he developed twelve standards for Indian education. He states that these standards should be addressed by any theory of Indian education. His fifth standard of Indian education is tradition. This standard states that:

Indian education maintains a continuity with tradition. Our traditions define and preserve us. It is important to understand that this continuity with tradition is
neither a rejection of the artifacts of other cultures nor an attempt to 'turn back the clock.' (p.29)

As was stated earlier our culture does not "stop still". Hampton reiterates this concept when he states:

Asking Natives to eschew automobiles, television, and bank accounts in the name of preserving their culture makes as much sense as asking whites to give up gunpowder because it was invented by the Chinese or the zero because it was invented by Arabs. It is the continuity of living culture that is important to Indian education... (p.29)

Stairs (1994:69) in her study of 'Indigenous ways to go to school' suggests that the ongoing negotiations between traditional and formal models of learning in indigenous schools needs to expand to the level of cultural meaning and values. She states:

Both indigenous teachers and cultural studies beyond the school are contributing to educational negotiations at this level of meaning and value. In the Mohawk schools described, ... the Iroquoian Thanksgiving Address is used as a foundation for all curriculum. The address offers thanks for all aspects of the universe and all levels of creation in a cycle from the earth through the forms of life to the stars.

The Aboriginal voice is lifted up when traditional knowledge and values are incorporated into the education of the Native students in the school system.

IDENTITY

As reflected in the literature, the results of this study indicate that the participants are still trying to fit into existing Euro-western school systems and have experienced the same kinds of identity crisis that many other Aboriginal nations encounter in this kind of situation. When the full voice of the people has been silenced, the people do not get the opportunity
to develop complete healthy identities. For example Cajete (1994:188) states:

[T]he long-term effects of ethnostress [or identity crisis] have become all-too-apparent in community disintegration, declining health, inadequate education and in the rates of alcoholism, suicide, and a host of other self-destructive behaviors, including child abuse.

A child's identity is developed through the interaction of many different experiences, with the home and school being the basic structures that affect identity development. In the past the school has had a negative effect on the identity of the Onyota’a:ka students. This in turn was conveyed to the next generation of children. The result of this study shows that the younger generation of students are struggling to find self-worth, dignity and freedom in the school system to be Onyota’a:ka. This is a difficult journey because as Hampton (1995:35) states:

Indian children face a daily struggle against attacks on their identity, their intelligence, their way of life, their essential worth. They must continually struggle to find self-worth, dignity, and freedom in being who they are.

Cajete (1995:189) has also assessed the school situation and found:

The struggle to maintain who we are, and what we believe in, has resulted in expressions of hopelessness and accompanying form of disempowerment. Collectively, American Indians continue to suffer from "ethnostress" that began during the time of first contact. Ethnostress is primarily a result of a psychological response pattern that stems from the disruption of a cultural life and belief system that one cares about deeply. Such a disruption may be abrupt or occur over time and generations. Its initial effects are readily visible, but its long-term effects are many and varied, usually affecting self-image and understanding of one’s place in the world.

When children are familiar with a particular culture and world view they will have a positive self-concept which will
allow them to be self-confident resulting in much higher feelings of self-esteem. In this study difficulty arises when Onyota’a:ka children are taken out of their cultural environment, the home, and exposed to other ways, the school. Contact with non-Native people changes the dynamics of the learning situation and places the Native child in a stressful position of learning an unfamiliar culture and a different worldview.

A stressful situation places the Native student in a disempowered position; therefore it is necessary to make changes that will cause authentic empowerment. Cajete (1994:190) says:

To have authentic empowerment you must have a system of education that not only trains for vocation but prepares individuals: for self-actualizing themselves, fulfilling their human potentials, enlivening their creative spirit, and finding their personal meaning, power, and what in earlier times Indian people called medicine. This is exactly what traditional Indigenous processes of education did. This education helped people find their way to the center of their individual and collective power. This is the essential meaning of the word empowerment. The implementation of Indigenous ways of education is toward this most basic of human need. It authentically empowers and perpetuates the development of the spirit of families, communities, and tribes.

In order for authentic empowerment to perpetuate the development of the spirit of families, communities and nations, Stairs (1995:64] states that:

As indigenous schooling evolves in many parts of the world, we are seeing an unpredictable diversity of educational designs which repeatedly defy the theoretical and methodological packages of non-indigenous educators. Optimistically, such designs evidence the possibility of evolving cultural identities as a rich range of alternatives to assimilation, isolation and anomie.

For these Indigenous schools to be empowering to the Native people Stairs says that Indigenous schools must serve as sites of
negotiation between cultures in contact. This negotiation between cultures means more than just learning about each others' cultures. Hampton (1995:41) states that:

At the historical level, Native and non-Native look at the world from opposed positions. Not only must they contend with personal differences in viewpoint, language, and experiences; not only must they contend with cultural differences in value, understandings of human relationships, and modes of communication; but they must contend with the world-shattering difference between ... the exploited and the exploiter, the racist and the victim of racism. It is this historical difference of perspective that demand more than 'learning about each other's cultures.' It demands that we change the world. The graduates of our schools must not only be able to survive in a white-dominated society, they must contribute to the change of that society. Standard twelve is transformation. Indian education recognizes the need for transformation in relations between Indian and white as well as in the individual and society.

With authentic empowerment, and with real transformation in Indigenous schools the Aboriginal people would no longer have to try to fit in to existing Euro-western school systems. Their voice would be used for self-expression in negotiation between cultures in contact.

A Summary of the Discussion

In summary, the findings of this study along with the literature review indicate that it is necessary to adopt alternative forms of education to give voice to the Native students so that they can have a holistic experience in the educational setting.
Conclusion

The literature that was examined for this study involved both the Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal perspective pertaining to the historical development of Native education, and the current situation in various Native communities' models of Indigenous education based on language, culture, traditional knowledge skills, and identity.

The data for this study focused on the learning experiences of participants from the Onyota'a:ka community. The reflection of personal learning experience was the basis of the research. The data were gathered by personal interviews and observation techniques. The issues were grouped into language, culture, formal education, traditional education, traditional knowledge and values and identity.

The findings of this study indicate that there is a connection between language and culture, and that each enhances the other. The Onyota'a:ka have great concern over the language and cultural loss that has taken place. They are developing new strategies and paradigms to maintain the language and culture of the Onyota'a:ka people.

Formal education displaced the traditional education system of the Onyota'a:ka. English is the language of instruction with the Onyota'a:ka language being taught as a subject. Some Native content has also been introduced into the formal system. The new Onyota'a:ka School Authority have chosen to follow the London Board of Education curriculum guidelines. Although there has been much change from the early years the findings of this study indicate that the traditional knowledge and values are still
practised in the contemporary setting of Onyotafa:ka. However, following the analogy of Coyote's Eyes it seems as though there is still an imbalance in the schooling of the Onyotafa:ka people.

It is found that to be in balance one must have a positive self-identity. The past school system did not promote a positive identity for the students. This study indicates that a positive self-identity is imperative for academic success.

From the results of this research it appears that the Onyotafa:ka recognize the need for a strong Native identity in order to maintain a balance between their society and mainstream society. Since education is a primary socializing agent in the community one of the main goals needs to be the development of programs that promote a positive identity for the Native student.

The data from this study indicate that Onyotafa:ka require a bilingual/bicultural type of education to make the circle complete. To date they have been operating in only one half of the circle. This has to change, because the Onyotafa:ka are a distinct nation and need to validate and promote their half of the circle in order to journey through life with balanced eyes.

As stated earlier my voice had become very muted and silenced during my journey through the elementary and secondary school system. Only in the recent years have I been able to develop and re-establish my voice as an Onyotafa:ka. It gives me great pleasure to manifest my identity and heritage through my art work. (see art work III)

When I was a young child our class was studying the explorations by the Euro-western settlers. One of the class room projects was to construct a large mural that would be hung across
the front wall to depict the adventures of the new people on Turtle Island. I wanted to participate in the drawing activities that were taking place but the classroom teacher decided that I could not draw to her standards therefore I would not be able contribute to the large picture. I learned to devalue my creative ability. Even though during my intermediate years I received more encouragement to pursue my art work, I still believed that I could not do an adequate job.

Awareness of the process used in the Euro-western education system of the Native Peoples of Canada has allowed me to be able to regain my voice. This in turn allowed me to value and respect every aspect of the Onyota’a:ka people. One of the ways I learned to assert my voice was in the world of visual art. This allowed me to pursue my creative ability to depict my heritage and be proud of who I am. Art Work III, painted by myself and entitled ‘Onyota’a:ka’, is a manifestation of the belief of whom I am as an Onkwehonwe. This is an acrylic painting completed on stretched deer hide. There are many circles of understanding presented in this painting. Onyota’a:ka is represented as part of the circle of life. In the circle each part of creation has a place and all parts are equal. The lacing of the deer hide represents the web of life and how all parts of creation relate
Art III. Onyota’a:ka

By Eileen M. Antone
and connect to each other. The use of the deer hide demonstrates the respect and significance the deer had in the Onkwehonwe traditional society.

The large stone in the center represents the name of the Onyota’a:ka people which translates to People of the Standing Stone. There is a wonderful story about this stone that many of the young people do not know or hear and therefore are unable to value and respect.

The three animals along side of the stone represent the three clans of the Onyota’a:ka. The bear clan are the medicine people; the turtle clan are the leaders; and the wolf clan are the warriors and protectors of the people. The clan system was used to help regulate the Onkwehonwe society. These teachings are also necessary for our people to know so they can identify with the meaning and richness of the culture. I remember hearing about a youth asking why other cultures had such beautiful symbols to identify with when all we had were animals. The teachings of the animal clans are many and varied and beautiful.

The Hiawatha Belt is a wampum belt that represents the forming of the Five Nations. This belt was designed to show the Iroquois Confederacy: Mohawk, Onyota’a:ka, Onondaga, Seneca and Cayuga. As is shown, the end paths were left open and therefore anyone wishing to join the confederacy was welcome. In the early 1700s the Tuscarora joined the confederacy. The middle symbol of the belt is where the weapons of war were buried under the Tree of Peace. This is also where the sacred fire of peace was lit, hence the Onondaga nation became the Fire keepers.

The eagle was a large strong bird with the gift of long
vision, so the Creator placed the eagle above the Tree of Peace to give warning of any danger that approached the people of the confederacy. There are many teachings that are associated with the great eagle.

The turtle also represents the creation story of the Iroquois people. The turtle gave its shell back so that Turtle Island also known as North America could be created for the Aboriginal people.

The four elements of life are also represented in this painting. Without air, water, fire, and earth there would be no life, it is important to keep these elements safe so that seven generations into the future are protected in the circle of life.

There are many more teachings found in this painting, too many to relate at this time. These are the kind of stories that our youth need to hear to give voice and balance to the learning of a positive identity.

Concluding Statement

From this study it has been found that The Onyota’á:ka have begun to nurture their voice of experience in the realm of education. According to the participants of this inquiry language and culture are important to the Onyota’á:ka people; therefore the linguistic and curricular content used to teach the children needs to come from within the community and be embedded in traditional cultural values concerning ways of using language, of interacting and of knowing. This in turn will allow the students to be able to enter mainstream society with a positive self-identity which will enable them to negotiate their place in
the larger picture.

It is imperative that Onyota’a:ka role models be retained at all levels in the schooling process in order for the children to learn the value system of the community. The cultural values and goals that come from within the Onyota’a:ka community need to be incorporated into the educational programs that are administered to these students. A strong relationship between the home and school is essential to develop and maintain the learning process of the children. For this to happen it is necessary that traditional knowledge, values, skills, interests and the wisdom of the elders be validated.

One of the basic ingredients to Onyota’a:ka education needs to be the vehicle of negotiation. Negotiation between traditional and formal models of learning needs to give voice to cultural meaning and values.

The Onyota’a:ka educational system must provide programs that promote self-worth, dignity and empowerment. Tho nah yawuh (Let it be so).
References


Indian Affairs. (RG 10 Files) PUBLIC ARCHIVES CANADA


Appendix A

Location of School Buildings

ONYOTA'A:KA OF THE THAMES

1. Original Oneida # 1
2. Relocated Oneida # 1
3. Original Oneida # 2
4. Additional School Oneida #2
5. Oneida # 3
6. Oneida # 4
7. Standing Stone School
8. Tsiniyukwaliho:ta

206
ONYOTA' A:KA
RR#2
Southwold, Ontario
N0L 2G0

***** TRUCK ROUTE
-- CAR ROUTE

HWY.402

LONDON

HWY. 2 & 4 EAST

LAMBETH

2ND CONC.

HWY. 4

INTERCHANGE 177
(17A+B)

N

INTERCHANGE 164 (18A)

THAMES RIVER

ONYOTA' A:KA VILLAGE

CTY.RD.35

BALMOORE ROAD

HWY.2WEST

HWY.401

Appendix B
Appendix D

Onyota’a:ka Education Authority Model 1993

• The Onyota’a:ka Education Authority draws from community members over age sixteen.

• Based on the traditional clan system there will be equal representation for each clan: the Wolf clan would have three directors and three co-directors; the Turtle clan would have three directors and three co-directors; and the Bear clan would have three directors and three co-directors.

• Therefore the Onyota’a:ka Education Authority Board would consist of nine directors and nine co-directors.

• From this group the executive board would be chosen. One chairperson would be selected from one of the clans represented. Two co-chairpersons would then be selected from the other two clans represented. Also selected would be a secretary and a treasurer.

• The Board of Directors would be responsible for setting up and selecting the Education Director for the Onyota’a:ka Education Authority Secretariat Education Department.

• The Onyota’a:ka Education Authority Secretariat would be responsible for tuition agreements, staffing and buildings.

• The following components of the Onyota’a:ka school system would come under the auspices of the Onyota’a:ka Education Authority Secretariat Education Department:

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<th>Finance</th>
<th>Support</th>
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